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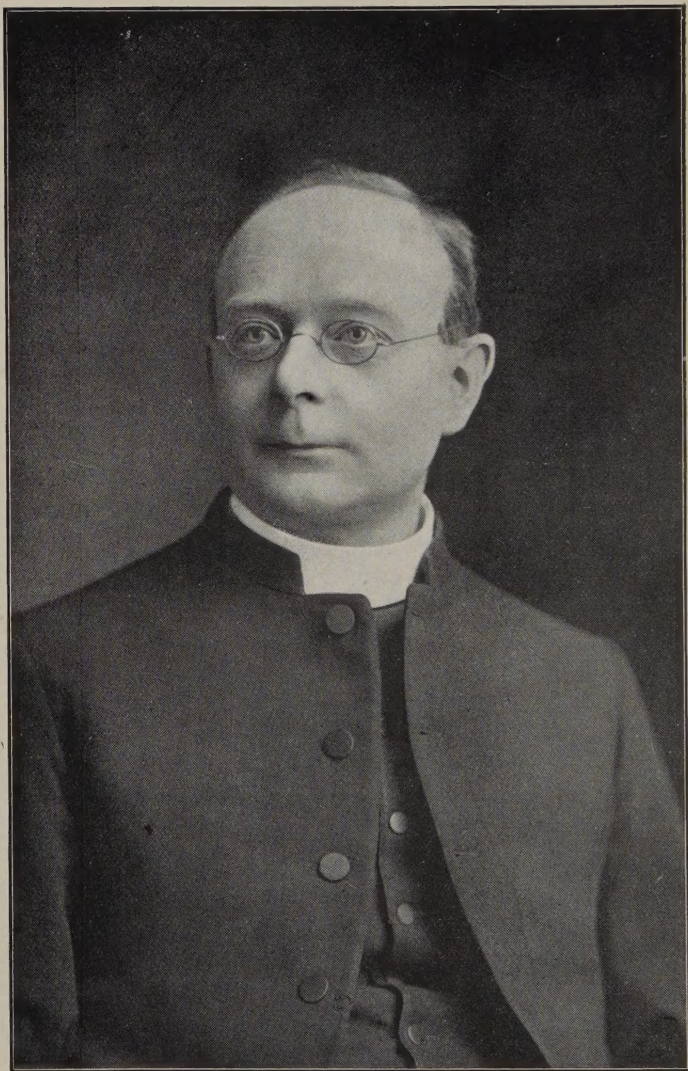


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A NORTH-COUNTRY PREACHER.



CANON FREDERICK LORANCE COPE.

Sermons

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A NORTH-COUNTRY PREACHER:

SERMONS

BY

THE LATE REV. F. L. COPE, M.A.,
HON. CANON OF DURHAM.

WITH

A MEMOIR

BY

THE DEAN OF LICHFIELD.

SUNDERLAND:

HILLS AND COMPANY, 19 FAWCETT STREET.

1911.

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PRINTED BY

HILLS AND CO., 19 FAWCETT STREET, SUNDERLAND.

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FREDERICK LORANCE COPE was the fifth son of J. A. M. Cope, Esq., of Drummilly House, Loughgall, Co. Armagh, and Pembridge Square, London. Born 26 February, 1857, he was educated first at a Private School; then for a time at King Edward VI's Royal Grammar School, Guildford, Surrey, of which the Rev. Dr. Merriman was Head Master; and ultimately at the Royal School, Armagh, which was then at the zenith of its fame and influence under the Rev. W. M. (afterwards Dr.) Morgan. One of his closest friends who was his schoolfellow for a time at Armagh, and was many years afterwards a near neighbour at West Hartlepool, recalls how even in those early days his unswerving principle, and his scorn of anything that was mean or cowardly, won for him a remarkable power, and marked him as a trusted leader in the School.

In October, 1875, at the age of 18, he entered at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he read Theology. He took his B.A. degree in 1879, being placed in the second class in the Theological Tripos of that year. One of his examiners was Professor Westcott, afterwards his Bishop at Durham. In 1882 he proceeded to the M.A. degree.

It was about the time that he was in for his Tripos that Dr. Lightfoot was appointed Bishop of Durham. From the day that he accepted this charge Dr. Light-

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foot kept before himself a scheme for gathering round him at Auckland Castle a band of young graduates, to be trained there under his own supervision, for Ordination in the Diocese. And one of the first group that met there in September, 1879, was F. L. Cope. There he remained for fifteen months, steadily reading and learning the rudiments of parish work. For this he found the opportunity in the mission district of "The Batts," on the bank of the river Wear, just below the Castle walls; of which he was placed in charge by the Rev. R. Long, then Vicar of Bishop Auckland, and afterwards Archdeacon of Auckland.

In Advent, 1880, he was ordained Deacon (and Priest a year later) to the Assistant Curacy of St. Peter's, Bishop Auckland, of which parish the Rev. W. D. Croudace, now Vicar of Eastgate, was then Vicar. He had special charge of a new mission room which had recently been built, near the Grammar School, and of the district attached to it. Already in those first years of his Ministry he gave abundant proofs of his exceptional gifts as a Parish Priest; and not least as a preacher of unusual promise. More than once Bishop Lightfoot remarked that he considered Cope the best preacher, for a young man, that he knew.

He only remained three years at St. Peter's. In 1883 a serious crisis arose in the Church life of West Hartlepool. A considerable body of worshippers had seceded, under somewhat peculiar circumstances, from the principal Church of the town, and had taken a large Armoury for Sunday Services. The danger was that they, earnest and good people as they were, might be-

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come alienated altogether from the Church. But eventually, after a careful investigation of the whole case, the Bishop undertook to support the movement, on condition that it was definitely made the basis of the formation of a new parish, and that he himself should appoint a Priest to be at the head of it. This proposition was accepted; and the Bishop at once selected Cope, young as he was, to take the charge. He knew his man: and never was his shrewd judgment more amply justified.

For eleven years the Rev. F. L. Cope remained at West Hartlepool. And it was there that he carried out what was the most remarkable work of his life. For the first two years he had the companionship of the Rev. H. R. Banton, a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, another Auckland student, who was ordained at Advent, 1883, and offered himself as a voluntary worker to help in the new enterprise. Starting with the Armoury as their only centre, these two young Clergy set to work to organise a regular parochial system. They attracted, and held together, a large congregation, with a well-trained choir under Mr. E. Wood (who is still the valued organist of St. Paul's): and they soon had a full Sunday School. So eagerly was the whole project pressed forward, that in less than two years from their arrival, the new Church of St. Paul's, built from the designs of the late Mr. C. Hodgson Fowler, was completed. It was consecrated on 18 November, 1885, by Bishop Lightfoot, who in his sermon drew attention to the happy feature that "Clergy and laity have worked energetically together. No difference of opinion has dis-

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turbed the harmony of action.”* From this new, and more fitting, centre fresh life and vigour radiated out continuously throughout the large, and constantly growing, parish attached to the new Church.

Soon after the Consecration of the Church the Bishop recalled Mr. Banton to Auckland to act as his Chaplain, and his place was taken by the Rev. E. F. Every, yet another Auckland man, the present Bishop of Argentina and Eastern South America, who stayed on with his Vicar and friend throughout the nine years that he remained in West Hartlepool. During all that time the life of the parish never once flagged, but steadily advanced, “from strength to strength,” so that it came rightly to be regarded as in the very front rank of well-ordered and progressive parishes.

The break came in 1894, when Bishop Westcott urged Cope to move from West Hartlepool to Gateshead as Vicar of St. Cuthbert's, Bensham. There he had to deal with quite different conditions of work. Again, it is true, he was faced by a rapidly increasing population; but it was a comparatively old parish with established traditions of its own. Also there were large Day Schools attached to the Church, and these had a special interest and delight for the new Vicar, who found in them, ready to his hand, a most potent means of influence. After the wrench from his own St. Paul's was over, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the life of his new parish, and watched in every way to develop it along its accustomed lines. It was while he was Vicar

* See *Leaders of the Northern Church*, p. 69.

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of Bensham that the new parish of St. Chad's, under its first, and present, Vicar, the Rev. H. C. Windley, was formed.

In 1899 yet another, and his last, change followed, when Bishop Westcott once more called upon him to move ; this time to St. Ignatius', Sunderland. This appointment was regarded with some surprise, if not misgiving, by those who knew him best : not that they did not recognise how excellent it was from the point of view of St. Ignatius' parish, as well as the splendid opportunities which that parish offered for a great work ; but because they considered him to be well capable of, and indeed pre-eminently marked out for, some larger parochial charge, in a post of wider influence. And yet the grounds on which the call was given and obeyed did credit at once to the Bishop and to the Priest :—to the insight of the one, and to the chivalry of the other. With each of them the inspiration was the same. It was a devoted loyalty to the memory of Bishop Lightfoot.

For the Church of St. Ignatius is Bishop Lightfoot's own Church. He built it at his own cost as a thankoffering for the first seven years of his episcopate. He consecrated it himself after his return from his first illness in 1889. He planned its fittings. He outlined its standard of worship. He selected its first Vicar, the Rev. Edgar Boddington. It therefore represents in a peculiar degree the great Bishop's own ideal of what a Parish Church in the North should be. Moreover, after his death it became, in more ways than one, a central rallying point for the older members of the Auckland Brotherhood. So that when the first Incumbent

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left for other work in Lancashire, it was with a true instinct that his successor was sought in one of Bishop Lightfoot's first students, who was the best qualified of all to maintain and develope the traditions which were enshrined in that Church. And it was a spirit alike of keen enthusiasm and of filial duty which prompted him readily to accept the offer.

What the power has been of his brave and self-sacrificing work there during the remaining eleven years of his life is known in full only to those who have been closely associated with him in the parish itself, or who have watched it as near neighbours in the other parishes of Sunderland. Year by year his influence ripened, and took deeper hold, until it radiated out from St. Ignatius' through all the great town, and wider and wider in the Diocese at large. His own people soon learned to trust him completely ; and when at last his strength was broken by ill health, their love for him, and their loyalty to him, never wavered, but only grew the stronger as they saw more and more in his own life the manifest proofs of the sustaining force of a real faith ;—the unconscious witness of a devoted servant of Christ.

More than once during those years, both before and after his health gave way under the strain of his labours, offers of other work were made to him,—in 1904, in 1906, and in 1910. But no pressure or persuasion could induce him to leave the people whom he loved with all his heart.

In 1909 he was collated by the present Bishop of Durham to an Honorary Canonry in Durham Cathedral. This honour he greatly appreciated, both on account of

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the recognition of his work in the Diocese which it signified, and as a direct link with the Cathedral. He also valued not a little his appointment as one of the Trustees of the Lightfoot Fund,* which again marked a double association: for it bore witness at once to his close attachment to his first Father in God, and to his intimate knowledge of the present needs of the Diocese.

He was before all essentially a Parish Priest. His whole life was bound up in the interests of his parish. And therefore he never sought to take part in the administrative work of any of the various Public Bodies of the towns in which his life was cast—with one exception. He was always keen about Education. Early in 1892 he became a member of the West Hartlepool School Board. When he moved to Gateshead he not only had the charge of the large Church Schools of his own parish, with an average attendance of 900 scholars, but also served on the School Board of the town. And yet again he was returned as a member of the School Board at Sunderland, where he was eventually co-opted on to the Local Education Authority when it superseded the School Board. Only four days before his death he attended a meeting of this Body.

For the call from his earthly work came suddenly at last. On the previous Sunday he had preached twice: in his own Church in the morning,† and in the neigh-

* This Trust was originally constituted by Bishop Lightfoot himself in September 1888. To it he handed over the copyright in all his writings, to be used for Church purposes in the Diocese of Durham. And it afterwards received a further accession of funds under his Will.

† See Sermon xix., p. 208.

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bouring Church of St. John's in the evening.* And it was while he was out visiting in the parish on the Wednesday following that he was seized by the attack which was so soon to terminate fatally, before another Sunday had dawned. But for a long time before his strength had been visibly failing. In the early months of 1906 he had an illness, which seriously weakened him. It was after that warning that his friends urged him to go to a lighter charge than that of St. Ignatius'. But nothing would move him, though the strain was really too great. In 1909 again he was laid aside for several months by a similar trouble to that which eventually caused his death. And once more, on his partial recovery, a change of work was pressed upon him, but without avail. When therefore it became known in the last week of September, 1910, that he had suffered another seizure, the result was sadly anticipated by all.

So there passed from us on Saturday evening, 1st October, 1910, one of the truest Parish Priests that have ever worked in the North. What he was as a friend, no words can adequately describe. Unwaveringly loyal and affectionate, with a stimulating cheeriness that was all his own; wise and careful in giving counsel, and ever ready to pour out a strong and interested sympathy, that was all the stronger because he never abated one fragment of principle: there was none like him.

And what he had been in himself, and how far his influence had quietly spread, was manifested when his body was laid to rest on Thursday, October 6. The

* See p. xxi.

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watchers through the preceding night in the Church he had loved so well, and served so faithfully; the Communicants at the Early Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist; the crowded, but subdued and grief-stricken, congregation at the Burial Service later in the day; the many friends of a lifetime that gathered from far and near; the silent and reverent crowds that lined the streets all the long way to the Ryhope Cemetery, and pressed round the open grave:—these all bore unmistakeable witness to the sure position which he had won for himself in the hearts of all that knew him.

Canon Cope was an effective Parish Priest all round. In visiting the sick, for instance, from the first he resolutely set himself to use the spiritual opportunity. A friend he was indeed, but he scorned to pay a mere friendly call. It was as a Pastor, watching over souls committed to his care, that he fulfilled this glad duty. Here is but one example, from a self-revelation given in an Ember-tide address to Candidates for Ordination at Trinity, 1885, when he was yet quite a young man.

“Go to them with a Gospel, not with a question. May I venture to give one example which will make my meaning plain? I was sent for only a few days ago to see a young girl, hardly out of her teens, who is dying fast of consumption. There she lay, with a pretty, child-like face, and with great lustrous eyes; and she said, ‘You know, Sir, I don’t profess religion.’ It was inexpressibly touching to hear these pitiful words from young dying lips. She told me how long she had been trying to believe that Jesus was willing to save her; but that it was

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no use. And so I told her the truth, which she had never heard before, that she was bought with a price, and was His already; and she said the words after me, so joyously,—‘Yes! I am a member of Christ, and He is the True Vine, and I am a Branch in Him. I am His child already; so I must live by the life He gives.—Thank you, sir, I am happy now.’ I don’t know that she ‘professes religion’ yet, and I hope she never will! But she loves our Lord Jesus. In a day or two she will love Him more.”

But it was in connexion with his singular gift of preaching that his power was perhaps most generally appreciated. For he exercised a remarkable force and influence as a Preacher. He always wrote out his sermons, and almost invariably preached from the manuscript. But he was not hampered by it in freedom of delivery. His manner and tone might strike a stranger at first as somewhat peculiar. It gave a kind of impression that he was half indignant with some one, or about something. But as the sermon proceeded this feeling entirely vanished. The well-argued thought, the quaint, original phrases, the flashes of inimitable humour, and through it all the deep ever present underlying note of intense earnestness at once dispelled all misapprehension; and the listener soon came to recognise that all the emphasis was really but a token of self-restraint, and the mark of an instinctive reverence; and, even more, of a deep sense of the profound importance of the work in hand. Here was a man of culture and wide reading, of burning devotion and faith, and of keen

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sympathy and knowledge of men, eager to impart his message, and pouring out a very word of life from his inmost heart.

For Canon Cope was a student to the end of his life. In all his pressure of practical work, and ministry to others, he never neglected his own reading. He was careful, first of all, to keep himself abreast with the latest light, from whatever source, on the Bible. His implicit trust in its spiritual revelation enabled him fearlessly to investigate every kind of criticism, and as fearlessly to accept whatever was proved to be true. But he was not a Bible student only. His general reading was wide, and varied, and solid. He might be seen, for instance, in a railway train, with a volume of Shakespeare as the companion of his journey : or during his summer holiday devoting his mornings to a careful study of the Cambridge Modern History. And thus he was enabled, year after year, as “a scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, to bring forth out of his treasure things new and old,” with constant freshness.

And as he was a student, so he was a teacher. He realised to the full the opportunity that the pulpit affords for declaring, in due order and proportion, “The Faith once for all delivered to the Saints.” To the previously uninstructed such a declaration is not always at the time quite palatable. On one occasion, at the beginning of 1886, he preached in St. Paul’s, West Hartlepool, a continuous course of nine sermons on some cardinal points of Church Doctrine. He was one day discussing these instructions with a prominent member of his congregation, when he was met with the remark, “Such things,

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Mr. Cope, are all very well for bookworms ; but you will never get the practical business men of West Hartlepool to believe that there is anything in Baptism." But before many years had passed, the faithful teaching had borne its rightful influence, and it was amongst the "practical business men" that some of the most loyal and understanding Churchmen were to be found.

And yet the teaching was given with a wonderful tenderness. There is an illustration of this which may be quoted. Among the Sermons which he has left, there is a striking one on the text, "And they shall be like people, like priest ;"* in which, by a bold inversion of the prophet's words, he takes upon himself, as the Priest, all the blame for certain features of remissness which had pained him in the life of his people ; and, while he felt bound, in painful duty, to call attention to them, argues that it was all due to his own fault : to his lack of strength as a leader, and of clearness as a teacher of the Faith. This of course was very far from being the case, whatever his sensitive modesty may have persuaded him to think. But it serves to shew the spirit of self-repression and of courtesy in which he would deal with such a situation when necessary.

For if need arose for correction or rebuke he would never shirk the matter. But what it must have cost him to administer it, it is difficult even to imagine. The following words of the Rev. Edgar Boddington, spoken in his Sermon at St. Ignatius' on the Sunday morning after Canon Cope's funeral, reveal something of the pressure of this burden :—

* Hos. iv. 9: preached at St. Paul's, West Hartlepool, 20 Nov., 1887.

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“With his child’s heart, purity, and sincerity, he went in and out amongst you, and he ever saw things truthfully, and feared not to speak the truth. Often he found it hard to do so just because of his very tenderness of heart. One characteristic saying of his flashes this into our minds. Getting up one day from preparing a sermon, he flung out, ‘The making of every sermon is a positive pain to me!’ That tells us what he gave. He gave of his best : he gave himself.”

It must not however be inferred that these words imply anything like a censorious habit on the part of Canon Cope. Nothing was farther from his nature : nothing was less customary in his sermons. At the most it can only be on extremely rare occasions that any true Parish Priest finds himself called upon to find fault publicly from the pulpit : and when it is one who entirely trusts, and is trusted by, his people, the need is of still rarer occurrence. But there are times when it is required ; and then the strain upon a real Pastor’s heart is intense. And it is just because the case is so exceptional that reference is made at all to the spirit in which it was met by Canon Cope.

“The making of every sermon is a positive pain to me !” So he revealed the sacrifice involved in working out his message week after week. It was with no light heart that he entered on his task, master though he was of the art of effective preaching. The choice of subject, the planning of the scheme, the proportion of the whole, the right interpretation of Scripture, the central lesson to be kept in view, the direct application to the circum-

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stances of his hearers, even the very phrasing of his sentences ;—these all caused him keen and continued anxiety, as his most intimate friends know well. In every detail “he gave of his best : he gave himself.”

And the result of all this was that his sermons never failed to be at once “impressive, instructive, and interesting.” They were the utterances of a prophet, an interpreter, and a friend. They held close attention of all who had any power of appreciation, with their freshness, and originality, and force. Here is what the Rev. C. H. Rolt, the Vicar of Huddersfield, who was the other preacher at St. Ignatius’ on Sunday 9 October, 1910, said about this : and he knew, for he lived and worked with Mr. Cope at Bensham for two years, from 1895 to 1897 :—

“Have you not noticed again and again as he preached to you and taught you here, how all he had to say centered always round our Lord ? It mattered not what his subject was : it might be,—often it was,—some passage out of the Old Testament. You listened enthralled as with almost matchless insight, and striking originality, he interpreted the past in the light of the present, and invested all with a fresh importance, and made the old scenes live as never before. You knew that sooner or later, with no trite familiar phrases, but with burning reality, Christ would be discerned to be the centre and point of it all. . . . No one seemed to me to preach Christ more fully ; and none with greater conviction or larger enthusiasm.”

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In reading through Canon Cope's sermons, the outcome and treasured store of nearly thirty years of preaching, it is very noticeable that one subject recurs over and over again, more frequently than any other ; it constantly receives indeed fresh treatment ; but it is never allowed to remain for long unrepresented : and that is "The Presence of God."* And this dominant note is significant. For it reveals the secret of the Preacher's own life. It was by the glad consciousness of that Presence that his whole character was moulded. Living in the very Presence of God he was able to take a large and generous outlook on all human affairs. No imperial interest was too vast to be grasped and guided by Faith. No matter of personal concern was too trivial to call out his closest sympathetic attention, so long as it was of moment to any child of God. It was the realisation of that Presence that enabled him to maintain, as few men can, an overflowing joy of life ; so that with his beaming face, and warm geniality, and never-failing fund of humour, he was a very impersonation of happiness, and radiated out brightness in whatever company he was found.

As the Rev. W. T. Jupp said, in referring to Canon Cope at a Ruri-decanal meeting in Sunderland : "It would be an impertinence to speak further of what all knew,—the most real spirituality and contact with the living God that was the force behind all that Canon Cope did or said. . . . But besides, there was a radiancy and a buoyancy of cheer-

* *e.g.*—Cp. Sermon iii., p. 29.

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fulness, not merely human (though that he had in plenty), that came from the simplest heart, as of a little child : and of him, all his life through, we might have said, and I dare to say it, ‘of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.’”

The power of God, he knew, held all things in control. The purpose of God for man, he was certain, was that all his earthly life should be filled with joy. In the Presence of God he lived all his years amongst us. To the nearer Presence of God he has now been called from us ; and “his works,” and his teaching “do follow him.”

It is not always a kindness to the memory of any Priest who has passed from earth to publish a selection of his sermons. A selection they can only be at best : a very small selection out of a very large number. And when they are read by strangers who did not know the man himself, they cannot reproduce in cold print the tone, the fervour, the personality of the living voice. But these sermons are intended chiefly for those who knew Canon Cope ; to whom his preaching has been one of the priceless boons of their experience in past years. To others they may make known something of the culture, the patient thought, the incisive vigour, and the deep reverence of an earnest student, and a devoted Parish Priest. To his friends they will recall the inspiration of a trusted spiritual guide.

The sermons which are included in this volume were preached, as the notes below the texts show, on various

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occasions during the past twenty-five years, for the most part in the three parishes of which Canon Cope was successively Vicar. They are arranged in the order of their dates.

One remark must be added on one of the sermons in this book, No. xvii., "On Growing Old." It was preached, as the note below the text shows, both at St. Ignatius', Sunderland, and at St. Paul's, West Hartlepool. After preaching it Canon Cope remarked to a friend, "I could only have preached that sermon to those I really knew, and amongst whom one had been actually growing old." As that friend adds: "This saying throws a delightful sidelight on the secret of his attraction as a preacher. His sermons were so often his own message to his own people; born of the mingled experiences of his own and theirs whom he had learned to understand."

So far as is known, only one of Canon Cope's sermons has hitherto been published. It was preached at an Annual Service of the West Hartlepool Church Sunday School Teachers' Association. It was printed in the *Church Sunday School Magazine*, and was subsequently issued separately by the Church of England Sunday School Institute, under the title of "An Offence of the Disciples" (St. Luke ix., 41). It was from this text and on this subject, treated on much the same lines, that Canon Cope preached on the last Sunday evening of his earthly life, in St. John's Church, Sunderland.

H. E. S.

Lichfield,

January, 1911.

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I JOHN i., 7.

4 April, 1886. 4th Sunday in Lent. St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.

DID you ever think of the tremendous importance of single words? It has sometimes seemed to people that our Lord was over severe when He said that for every idle word (that is, not bad, wicked even, but just idle, empty), for every idle word men must give an account at the last day.* But that judgment comes from a superficial view of the case, from overlooking the truth, to which our Lord's saying recalls us, that a word is an act, a deed; a bad word is a bad deed, and so must be judged. We regard our words as light, airy nothings, of no significance. But they are not. They are eternal doings, with never-ending consequences. I remember John Ruskin's reply when he was rebuked for using severe language of John Stuart Mill: "because," said the reviewer, "you ought not to speak harshly of the dead." Ruskin answered that Mill was not dead,

* St. Matt. xii., 36.

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that he had spoken words and written books, which all were living actions to-day ; that he lived again in his words, and for these he attacked him.

Some people's words can hit harder than their fists.

Think then of the tremendous importance of words ; how we ought to try to understand the meaning of the words we use ; to find out the right meaning, and apply it correctly ! Endless confusion and mischief would be avoided if we did ; perhaps nowhere more than in religious words. I use a word or expression and mean something by it ; then you use the same word or expression and mean something quite different by it ; then perhaps you assault me, not for what I mean, but for what you mean yourself, and there arises a pitched battle, on a false issue ; which is a great pity. Or a word is used by some acknowledged authority,—say, the Bible : I overlook the connexion in which the word occurs ; fail, or do not take the trouble, to make out the real sense in which the Bible employs it ; apply it to some pet private theory of my own ; and then exclaim triumphantly, ‘ the Bible says just what I say ; if you don't accept what I say, why you don't believe the Bible.’

Or another consequence of using words in a wrong sense is (and this is one of the saddest of all), that the high thoughts and hopes and aspirations of noble minds of old are dragged down and robbed

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of their spiritual value, and made common, and spoiled. The result is that by applying great words to something lower which they do not properly mean, you despoil them of the higher significance they first had, and we lose the heritage handed down to us in them. Run your mind rapidly over the commonst religious expressions of to-day, and you will perceive this: Salvation, Conversion, Heaven, Hell, Life, Death, Atonement, Sacrifice; especially that of which just now I am going to speak, The Blood of Jesus; all these, in common (too common) use, have been robbed of their proper Bible meaning and disenchanted. It requires a great effort to get back to the simple word of God.

I will take one other example of this, which will serve to bring out my meaning. Take the one word in which, most of all perhaps in the Bible, is summed up and contained the adoration, and worship, and passionate longing and striving of the creature after the Creator, of the child after the Heavenly Father; the word reserved of old for solemn occasions and great festivals, belonging to the Sanctuary of God, uttered (to grand strains of music) by the temple choirs of Jerusalem, standing meekly robed and vested before the entrance to the Holy Place; the word which embodied, so to speak, the praise of the chosen people and the ancient Church; and then, as bearing that value and significance on earth, imaged in high

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visions of prophets and Apostles, as the refrain and burden of the hymns of Saints in Heaven ; an angelic song ; the word repeated by the lips of children in praise of the Redeemer ; repeated in song by the Redeemer Himself at the last Passover Feast ;—Hallelujah ! ‘Praise the God of Israel.’ So St. John writes in his Heavenly vision : “I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah : for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto Him.”*

But how the word has suffered in our mouths ! It is all common now : the glory has departed. No visions of thronged temples worshipping in awful reverence ; not the rich harmony of blended voices falling in lingering cadences on the ear ; not the mystic memory of the Apostle’s revelation, and the Heavenly company praising God ; nor nature’s many tones of the sea and of thunder and of man. But, instead, the melody of Heaven defamed to a ‘street catch,’ and turned into a nickname, and dragged through the dirt of towns ; so common is it made. In short, the word has been spoilt for ever ; henceforth it stands for something else ; its foretaste of Paradise is lost to us. I

* Rev. xix., 6, 7. (R.V.)

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expect the angels have had to find another song to sing !

So you see what makes it so important to use words in their proper sense. Words stand for ideas, stand for thoughts. We cannot present our thoughts naked and alone ; we are forced to clothe them in words. Words are the garments which thoughts wear. But in this necessity, this limitation of our being, lurks the possibility of infinite deception and confusion. The same word may be made to do duty for totally different thoughts. We are deceived by the garment the thought wears. We take a word to cover a certain meaning, and in reality it covers quite a different one. We need to look for and discern the true meaning. There may be two thoughts totally distinct in reality, but we confuse one with the other because they are dressed alike in the same word. Like all God's best gifts, the gift of language needs to be used intelligently, and let me add, honestly, or it becomes a curse and a bondage.

Now, all that I have been saying applies with special force to the deep words of St. John in the text, "The Blood of Jesus Christ . . . cleanseth us from all sin." What I have wanted to do is to rouse you to the necessity there is in dealing with such words to discover precisely what is the thought they were intended to embody ; to refuse to be put off with the spurious substitute of lower thoughts tak-

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ing possession of the Apostle's language, and so passing itself off as his.

“The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” What did he mean by the Blood of Jesus Christ? Here certainly is an expression which has been sadly damaged and defaced in the lapse of time. If I am not mistaken, there is a kind of disgust and impatience in many minds stirred by the talk of “the Blood of Christ,” and the like; not for a moment, I am sure, in disrespect for the disciple whom Jesus loved, least of all for the Master Himself; but in pure weariness of the senseless, unintelligent use made of such expressions by professing followers of His; in genuine despair of extracting any substantial and tangible meaning out of the words they use so trippingly and glibly; despair of bringing them down out of the sphere of excited and morbid feeling into the range of fact and sober reality, where they can be tested and weighed.

People talk much of the “Fountain filled with Blood,” in which sinners are washed and lose their guilty stains; they sing the praises of the “Precious Blood”; and so on: and when you try to find out precisely what they mean, they cannot tell you. ‘What do you mean by the Blood of Christ?’ asks the bewildered seeker after truth; ‘there is not any Blood really, any real Blood; you use the word to express, to explain, some idea, some truth behind it. What is this truth, this idea, presented by the

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formula, "the Blood of Christ?" What do you mean? Every parable, analogy, comparison, implies something which it is intended to illustrate. What is the fact of which the "Blood of Christ" is the parable, analogy, comparison? What do these words illustrate? And it is from the apparent hopelessness of arriving at any practical answer to that question, that so many retire in disgust from the whole subject.

But now, St. John had a meaning for the words he used, tangible and clear enough to all who heard him. You see the importance of really discovering the meaning which every writer or speaker intends in his words. We disregard entirely the circumstances of speaker and of hearers, and the context of his epistle, and therefore we are wholly astray in our interpretation, and we miss the teaching of Scripture. The simple fact (which we overlook) is, that St. John was a Jew writing to Jews, or, at least, to a Christian society, founded on, and grown up out of, the Jewish covenant; and there could not be a moment's hesitation in a Jew's mind, or, I may say, in the mind of anyone properly acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures as to what was intended by the "Blood of Christ." The words bring you at once to the symbolism of sacrifice: and the question simply is, what was meant by Blood in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.

That is stated again and again; the Blood is

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the seat of Life. It is spoken of directly as the Life itself: "Be sure that thou eat not the Blood, for the Blood is the Life;"* or again, "Flesh with the Life of it, which is the Blood of it, shall ye not eat."† I do not know how far this conception is justified by later knowledge. But beyond question to the Jew the blood in a man or an animal meant the life of the man or the animal; and a man might not use another's blood, that is his life, for the support of his own life. And then, according to this idea, so entirely were the blood and the life regarded as one and the same, that by shedding the blood, the life in it was not thought to be destroyed, though separated from the body which before it quickened. When Cain killed Abel, life departed from the body, but remained in the blood: "What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto Me from the ground."‡

So it was that in sacrifice the blood was sprinkled upon the altar to make atonement. It was not the offering of blood according to our idea, but of life. The blood is treated distinctly as a living thing. We read: "I will set my face against that soul that eateth Blood. . . . For the Life of the flesh is in the Blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the Blood that atones through the Life."§

* Deut. xii., 23.

† Gen. iv., 10.

† Gen. ix., 4.

§ Lev. xvii., 10, 11.

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So St. John's words must be clearly interpreted in the light of Old Testament ideas set forth in sacrifice.

Now see the ideas underlying the sacrifice of a victim at the altar :—

(1) The death of the victim by the shedding or taking away its blood, that is to say its life :

(2) The liberation of the life by which it had been animated, so that this life became available for another end : that is to say, for uniting the offerer by the life he offers, to God.

In the sacrifice the victim was slaughtered by the person who came to offer the sacrifice : the death was inflicted by him ; and he acknowledged so the due punishment of his sin. But then the sprinkling of the blood on the altar was the work of the priest. The bringing near to God of the life so rendered up was the office of the appointed mediators between God and Man. Death and Life were both exhibited ; Death as the consequence of sin, and Life made, by the Divine appointment, a source of life. The life was first surrendered, and then united to God. So far the idea and intention of the sacrifice is clear enough ; but, after all, necessarily imperfect. The union between the offerer and the offering was not a real union : the victim was irrational, so that there could be no true fellowship between it and the

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offender. Its death was not free; so it could not embody real surrender to the Divine will.

But now in Christ, all that was foreshadowed by the Mosaic sacrificial system, all that was wanting in it, was supplied. All men are made capable of vital union with Him, the Son of Man; in Him all men find their true life. He sacrificed Himself: He endured the Cross at the hands of men: He was at once offered, and offered Himself: and "by His own blood He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."*

So, you see, the Blood of Christ means Christ's Life. Christ's Life, first, as rendered in free self-sacrifice to God for men; and, secondly, as brought into perfect fellowship with God, having been set free by death. The Blood of Christ is, as shed, the Life of Christ given for men; and, as offered, the Life of Christ now given to men, the Life which is the spring of their life. So "The Blood of Christ" always includes the thought of the Life preserved and active beyond death. In St. John's Gospel we read, "Except ye drink the Blood of the Son of Man ye have no life in you:"† that is, participation in Christ's Blood is participation in His Life; and it is only through His death, His violent death, that His Blood can be liberated and made available for men.

* Heb. ix. 12. † vi. 53.

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Now then, we can understand the words of the text, "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." The idea is of the Blood, or Life of Christ, as a living, energetic Power now, as a Fountain of Life now, opened by Death and flowing for us still. St. John did mean a real practical thing when he spoke of His Blood; and no other word or form of words expresses the truth he means so well.

Now I hope that the words are plainer? They mean that in Christ, Risen and Ascended, a source of active outflowing life and cleansing exists, and is still open to us; that we may in spirit and mind and will (that is to say, in sober fact and reality) draw near to Him, seek Him in faith, and find Him, and be found of Him; that this is true, that so doing, so seeking, we shall receive His positive definite gift of life and purity. Through His death we can come into contact with His Person. All this, which it is so difficult, and takes so many words, to express, St. John expresses for us quite simply and easily when he says, "The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."

But the object of all I am saying is this; to ask you to come at this time to Christ for this cleansing; to come with true repentance (and we need, all of us, repentance every day), and true faith, that this Christian Faith is fact, not fable; to come to our Saviour, that He may point out to you your sins

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and your secret faults, and strip you of them, you being willing, and make you clean again as little children by the virtue of His Blood.

At this time, I say, because now we draw on again to the great Christian Passover, the great yearly celebration and remembrance by the Church of the Sacrifice of the Cross of Christ. And we take these days of Lent that we may more fitly, at least more thoughtfully, enter upon that season. We want to be prepared and clothed in an active consciousness of what we are about in the worship of Holy Week and Easter. It is not a mere human arrangement, or a mere ecclesiastical regulation by which we keep the Christian Festivals, and especially Easter. I do not see that Easter is one bit less of Divine appointment for Christians than the Passover was for Jews. We know that the Apostles kept the Passover still always to the end of their lives; that is to say, filling the Jewish remembrance with high Easter thoughts, and keeping Easter, in fact, when they were keeping the Passover.

I believe a worthy celebration of Easter is what God asks of us, and deigns to accept of us. As our Lord pleads for us in Heaven, so we on earth act over again, and spread before the Father, the sufferings and death of Christ; and we take upon us for a time the sorrow of temptation and conflict with sin, so that also we may have a heart

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to rejoice with all Christendom when Easter comes. The time passes away, and our efforts slacken ; we tire of prayer and strictness ; but still there is some time left, time to lay ourselves out before Him and to pray for His cleansing, time still to do something towards the overcoming of our sins. You do miss blessings and joys if you disregard these seasons. 'None rejoice in Eastertide less than those who have not grieved in Lent.' But there is time yet, if not before, to be in earnest, and watch, and catch some of the holy spirit of the season. Time to bring your heart to approach Christ's Cross, that so you may be cleansed and inspired, and be able to rejoice in His Resurrection. What a thing to have a cold, dead, earthly heart on Easter Day, unmoved by the Saviour's joy ! But if we don't prepare, we cannot rise ; we cling to the dull earth.

Remember, in conclusion, we come to Christ's Cross to be cleansed, not particularly to be made happy. He does not say, the Blood of Christ makes us happy of all our unhappiness, but cleanses us of all our unrighteousness. Clean, not joyful ; that is what we want to be.

Some people now-a-days persuade themselves to be happy, and yet they are not clean. We come to Christ to be cleansed from sin by His Blood. Neither do I want simply to be forgiven. Forgiving me doesn't make me clean. Yet He can make me clean. When I know my sins, and hate

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them, and groan under their bondage, and aspire to be free, then the new life He gives flows into me, and works invisibly there. He takes away my sins. The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth me (and I shall be clean one day) from all my sin.

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“He hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him.”—ST. LUKE xxiii., 8.

16 Nov., 1890. 24th Sunday after Trinity.

St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.

HERE is a man, in this passage of the text, disappointed with Christ. To those of us who have learned to see in Christ all grace and perfection of help and love, the one human Love that makes real to us the fact of God, and endows with permanence and eternity our own close human affections ; to those who have come to find in Him, in a word, the Presence of God ; it seems most strange that another should have met Him, and found in Him nothing to admire at all ; only every expectation disappointed, every hope blunted, every bright illusion scattered. But we do find this still ; and I am going to see if I can find also the reason for it,—this disappointment with Christ, disappointment with God.

I suspect if you could look fairly into the minds of those who say they do not believe in God, you would generally find this—a disappointment—at the bottom of their unbelief. I do not find that minds ever travel in the other

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direction. They go from belief to unbelief, never from unbelief to unbelief ; that is to say, they never begin with unbelief, and then harden in unbelief.

This faith that there is no God is, I imagine, never one of those convictions which commend themselves to a man's mind the longer he lives and the more he sees (aye, and feels !). Quite the opposite is the case. Clear, fearless, and astute thinkers I could name, who have been brought up in a traditional school of doubt, who have taken in, with their mother's milk, a matter-of-course contempt for theology and divinity : and then you notice this ; in such a man, as time goes on, the scorn dies away from his lips, he speaks more dubiously against the ancient faith, and is less angry with it. You catch a sense of incompleteness and hesitation, a tone of wistfulness, a half-formed longing that says plainly, 'I would believe if I might.' I am thinking especially of J. S. Mill ; but it applies to many more. Even Dr. Martineau, with his deep, restful faith in God, began his life in a school of absolute negation.

Yes ! those who have tried to live with never an expectation of a mighty hidden soul of the world near to them, have opened eyes and hearts and found it so. To them life was no disappointment, but a growing wonder and revelation, a discovery of all unlooked for being and

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purpose and reason in the world. Often has simplest, humblest faith in God sprung up where denial was before. But the blatant, noisy scepticism, the rude, coarse, violent mockery, and shocking of others' most sacred hopes, is nearly always the result of a disappointment.

Such aggressive unbelief is born of foolish faith. A man has expected what he had no business to expect, believed what he had no ground for believing, and then, on finding out his mistake, he has given all up and thrown everything over. He has treated his God as the heathen treat theirs: first with superstitious reverence, then with growing contempt, then with axes and hammers; and you are forced to think that the easily-discarded faith, to begin with, could never have been of much higher order than the superstition of the savage. It is safe to say that those who are quite sure there is no God are those, and those alone, who have been far too sure that there is: those who have once believed and been disappointed. Oh! it is wise to guard yourself from fatal disappointments of your faith. If a man did not believe foolishly, he would not be disappointed. Beware of foolish faith.

There are those who lay themselves out for such disappointments; who are so sure of the special Providence of God that they can confidently dictate its working, and almost make

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God responsible for every folly they commit. And, on the other hand, there are those who deny that it is ever God's doing, except in the marvel and the prodigy; who see nothing grand or awful or beautiful in the regular ministry of Nature and the ordered sequence of every day. Stars may shine and sunlight gleam, the spring-time burst into life, the shadows fall, the waters murmur as they run, the broad earth conceive and bring forth her teeming produce for her children's need: but to them this is all of course; it is not God: they do not thank Him for this. But when Nature arises with terrible might from her Sabbath dream, and avenges violated law; when a score of lives are sacrificed by a sick signalman's mistake, or ten score as the penalty for losing the way at sea; then such people will believe God blasts who would never believe He blesses; and because they are pleased to be disappointed with Him, very illogically refuse to believe in Him at all.

It makes me fret to think how many there are who are content to live on in ordinary times with never a grateful, loving thought and acknowledgment for life's mercies, with simply no practical belief in God at all; yet when shocking disasters come, with great loss of life, then, and not till then, they manifest belief, but only to murmur and condemn. They believe bad of God; they won't believe good of

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Him. They are disappointed. He ought to have stopped it; ought to have turned upside down the order of the world. Like King Herod, they “hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him;” and because that is not the way He saves, they dare to mock and flout Him.

I will illustrate this strange disappointment with God from the text. It is King Herod of whom the words were written. It was at the trial scene, when Pilate had sent Jesus bound to the Jewish King, and Jesus stood before that bad man, defenceless; in that very crisis when He touched at the same time the very lowest depth of physical humiliation, and attained the supreme bound of spiritual majesty and Divine glory.

“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad: for he was desirous to see Him of a long season, because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.”

You would judge very partially and shallowly if you acquiesced in that first impression that Herod was moved by a merely idle curiosity to behold some wonderful work of power, to be wrought for

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his Kingship's special benefit. I do not read him so ; as if he positively mistook our Lord for a sort of conjuror, who would consent for a consideration to perform before the Court. If you have interpreted so (as indeed, I am bound to say, all 'lives of Christ,' that I know of, do interpret), I ask you to consider a much different view.

I think that the hope Herod had based upon a meeting with Christ was of another kind to that. Surely the language used by the evangelist indicates a stronger feeling than curiosity. 'He was exceeding glad when he saw Him, for he was desirous to see Him of a long time, and he questioned Him in many words.' Many a soul then longed after Christ. Many a one does so still, which yet has never dreamed of real discipleship. It is nothing strange that the King should have been powerfully drawn to Him. No! You must look deeper into the heart and the life of this man who so longed after Jesus, and so rejoiced exceedingly when at last he found Him.

There is another passage in his life known to us which throws a flood of light upon his character. He was a weak, bad man. The only words of pure contempt that are recorded from the lips of Jesus were spoken of him: "Go ye and tell that fox," He said. Herod had taken away his brother's wife at a time when he was his brother's guest, and then sacrificed the lives of many brave soldiers in defence

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of his sin. He had killed John the Baptist to gratify his fellow-sinner's idle whim. But still, though I cannot find that anyone who writes of him has a word of good to say for him, yet it seems to me there was a time, indicated in one luminous passage of the gospels, when higher impulses strove with the bad within, and he stood, even he, on the threshold of a better life : and this, I think, gives us the clue to his longing after Jesus, and so to his disappointment with Jesus. Let me try to show you how.

When that foul blot of Herodias had fallen on his soul ; when every honourable man must have drawn away from him in disgust ; when, in his infatuation, one would have supposed no minister of God would have thought it worth while to attempt persuasion or appeal ; then one stern, true prophet went to him and rebuked his vice. In matters of right or wrong all men are equal. Even Kings have consciences which are liable to hurt if they are wronged. That is where no one ever has escaped, or ever can escape, the grasp of God. He holds us ; and will ever hold us ; for when we sin, we are sorry. Our own very self rises up in vengeance and punishes our self : and there is no other punishment, bodily or mental, to compare in searching torture to the self-punishment of conscience, as all the history of the human mind abundantly proves. John the Baptist spoke, and the King could not choose but hear.

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It was at the risk of his life he spoke. The rebuke eventually cost him his life, and yet the King was strangely affected. Very wonderful is that verse of St. Mark's : " Herodias would have killed him ; but she could not : for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."* Vice has a very sincere and almost touching respect for real virtue. It can unfailingly identify the genuine grace of true goodness. The account is unerringly true to nature. The heart of even so bad a man is really on the side of right. A bad man longs for right sometimes with a passion that better men do not know.

Herod "observed him, and did many things, and heard him gladly," when he allowed himself for a time to rest under the righteous influence of the prophet. And just as you read some forceful book with which you cannot really agree, yet, for its charm of manner and persuasiveness, you yield yourself up, and let your mind go along acquiescingly, unresistingly, with the writer,—for the time of criticism and judgment comes later,—so it was with Herod. For the time he was possessed with the prophet's fervour for right : it was all in unison and agreement with his own mind—for the time : he heard him gladly, and that caused him to feel

* St. Mark vi., 19, 20.

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himself just and holy. 'Twas a novel, and very pleasing, sensation ! For a time no doubt he knew the peace and gladness of well-doing. Only unfortunately it was a feeling caused by anticipation, not by realisation. It was fancy, not fact. It came before the event, not after. It was only a dream of what might have been. Nevertheless it was probably the happiest time of all that bad man's days, when, as I said, he stood, for a little, upon the threshold of a better life.

Alas ! he had given himself too wholly to evil to get so easily free. It isn't just wishing and imagining that can set any of us free. Satan kept a grip upon his slave, and hounded him back from the path of peace. It is a refined malice, which is exquisitely tragical, by which in the event, Herod's own hand is the hand that drives away Herod's good angel, and secures himself again for Satan. Against his will, he is let in for destroying the one good influence of his life. He killed John the Baptist ! and his brief hour of peace was turned to an agonising, haunting memory. In like manner this Herod's father, in a fit of fury, caused to be put to death the only being he ever loved, the one bettering softening influence of his life, the beautiful Mariamne.

Well then, we have the testimony, again and again repeated, that when afterwards Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, he thought it was

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John the Baptist risen from the dead.* This superstition obviously had become a rooted idea in the King's mind. He was used to bloodshed ; but this preyed upon him. He had feared him living, and he feared him dead : and yet, which is again most strange, we read in St. Luke, " he desired to see Him." Believing that Christ was the very friend he had so foully murdered, he yet " desired to see Him." And you may judge how terrible must have been the torment of self-reproach he had endured, when he looked to this as preferable—a meeting with his victim from the grave—that he might set his mind at rest.

And then at last his desire is gratified ; the man he sought is set before him ; another prisoner stands there, as John had stood, with calm intrepid bearing. We know now why he wanted to see Him. For no mere idle curiosity ; but " he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him," or rather, some sign wrought by Him : something to speak out of the awful past ; yea, if even to rebuke as of old, something to convince him ; something so striking as to take him back and make him what he was, when he had hovered once between good and evil ; something to give him again the joy of well-doing, without the tedium of doing well.

* St. Matt. xiv., 1, 2.

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So he "questioned Him in many words": he braced up his desperate, coward heart to find out if this were indeed the prophet risen from the dead. He asked, and asked: and his Prisoner, his Victim, stood and answered not a word: not one word, to the King in his Court. I cannot, under these circumstances, conceive a more terrible punishment for Herod, nor one that must have cut and appalled him more.

He was in a measure apologising; so I think. He had, at least, a whole tissue of doubts and fears which were to be lightened by what he should hear from the Prisoner; and now he could not get from Him one single word. That was to threaten him with the terrible truth, that there was no more to be said; that his penitence (if he was penitent) was not genuine, and too late. It was for Jesus to stand there, with His Spirit absolutely free, and out of reach, and triumphant, do what they would to the poor Body, to judge and condemn the King, His judge. And Herod was terribly disappointed. He shewed his disappointment with an outburst of brutal fury.

It may be that he thought he was taking the first step back to right. But Christ knew he was doing nothing of the sort. And it seemed to Herod as if his repentance was thrown back in his face; and his hope, whatever it was, was absolutely dashed. Christ proved to be no help to him, such as John

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had been. Here was no answer, no power to help. Through and through, he was thoroughly disappointed with Christ.

Now I want to ask what was the reason of it? And why is it still, that some who come to Him, or think they come to Him, are bitterly disappointed? For has he not said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out?"* They have come before God; but it is as it was with the false prophets of old: there was "neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."† And they have heard that good men prove prayer a power; but their prayers achieve nothing.

And what if you or I are doomed to a disappointment like that? If, when we find Him at last, He should answer us not a word, and we should simply know that we had failed and betrayed Him, and that the truthful and just One has nothing to say to us. 'Lord! have I not desired Thee? Have I not, these many years, longed to see Thee, and hoped to see some miracle done by Thee? I am not what I should be, or what (if I had been faithful) I might have been; yet I hoped that Thou would'st put forth Thy power and make me all right; and now Thou turnest from me silently. When was the day I have not thought of Thee? and I have read Thy Word, and asked many

* St. John vi., 37. † 1 Kings xviii., 29.

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times for Thy forgiveness when I have sinned. What more could I have done? And yet with all, Thou remainest silent. Oh! how different a meeting I had pictured to myself.'

But the simple fact is that He can have no comfort to bring, no answer to give, either here and now, or at that day when we shall meet Him face to face, to those whose hearts and lives, after all, are worldly and not godly: I mean, who, in the main, have tended to sink into themselves, and not to rise up, victoriously, to God. What can such be, save disappointed with Christ? They are out of touch with Nature, out of touch with God. How can He satisfy them, when they are not sincere? What wonder they do not find, when they are not really seeking? And God is ever to them, as when the host of Pharaoh followed disobediently in Israel's path, a dark, impenetrable cloud, shadowing all their way.

Disappointment? Aye! bitter disappointment. Oh! if they could come round into the brightness of the glory on the other side! How real would He be to them then; if they would put aside what hinders, and be humble, and earnest, and obedient to the inward voice, and put away the blinded heart which cannot see, and set about to fashion all themselves after Christ, and ever lift their being up to Him, and keep in His Presence.

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That way shall not be grievous ; there shall be no disappointment in it. God will not be uncertain ; they will know. Christ will not be silent ; He will answer. Prayer will not fail. From Him, the Sun of our souls, light will stream forth in the wilderness, and illumine every sad passage and dark byepath there. No other sign or miracle shall we need than the warmth of His sustaining love, the present inspiration of His grace, the certainty of our rest in Him.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

"Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Presence."—PSALM XXXI., 20.

3 May, 1891. Rogation Sunday. St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.

WE can usually judge of ourselves pretty accurately by noting where it is we turn to for refuge and repose. We might judge of others too in this way, except that we know so little of others, and it is never safe to draw conclusions from partial evidence. But we have all the evidence in our own case if we choose to study it ; and so, for ourselves, the test is a fairly adequate one. I have read that it is a practice among clever detectives who want to know more about some suspicious criminal, to let him escape, and then track him to his lair. We can sometimes so engage the moral police of our own consciences to follow the wanderings of our unsuspecting selves, and find out whither they tend, to what refuge they make for safety.

Depend upon it, we all of us have, in fancy or in fact, a refuge, a cave, a fortress, a home, a place of retreat. This may be noble or ignoble ; the aspiration of a growing, expanding soul, or the miserable falling back and prostration of a defeated

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will. It may be some hope cherished and toiled for through years, embraced in early life and rigorously prosecuted all through ; or it may be the shameful relapse upon what is simply pleasant and easy : it may be love, it may be hate : it may be expectation of good to come, or recollection of good gone by ; for some people live more in the past than in the present, which is not healthy : it may be self-denial or self-indulgence : God or the world. But whatever it is to which we turn for comfort and refuge, that can tell us a truth about ourselves and what we are.

In all stages of their life men do have for themselves some form of retreat to which they turn in need. Perhaps you see it best when they are in adversity, and on their defence against cruel fortune and the harsh world. Then the conduct of men resembles in a degree the behaviour of the animal creation beneath them. What is their resort ? How do they protect themselves ? Perhaps they turn like a stag at bay and fight desperately and struggle to the last, or with determined courage they go in and attack the overwhelming odds. Others are best suited for flight and evasion : they rely upon their ready wit and craft to deceive. So animals and insects and birds will assume a protective colouring and form ; a beetle makes itself look like a wasp, or a lizard like a poisonous serpent : and so people, too, make themselves appear what they really are

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not, and guard themselves in that way. Others crouch in abject submission, weak and timid : the bird with broken wing creeps away and hides ; and some people are like that. One animal will even protect itself by the most offensive smell, with which it can infect its assailant : there are people something like that too, who are safe, from their very loathsomeness ; whose very contact defiles so much that their enemies prefer to let them alone. But always there is some resource, some refuge, on which animals and men alike rely.

Now here comes in the teaching of Scripture. Men are different, and can behave differently, from the animals. They too, like the animals, have defensive powers and defensive instincts, but they are not slaves to nature, they do not act by blind instinct. To the wonderful machinery of the body, with its trained inherited powers, is added a reason like in kind to the Creator's. Men do not simply act, they choose. They can survey the whole process with a self that stands apart critically. This brings in the possibility of error, from which the lower necessity of the animal life would have saved them ; but it gives a possibility of higher good, which is not open to the brute. Thus man's refuge, man's resource, is other than theirs : he need not simply depend on himself ; he can enlist other powers of protection. Weak in himself he learns to use Nature's strength : he learns trust ; trust in power

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beyond his own, which becomes his own by trusting. His little finger can direct the weight of the world and the power of the sea, till all the elements are his servants. So he is led to a different form of refuge. So far as he is alone and depends like the animal on self only, so far as he goes *in* for refuge, he is weak ; so far as he goes *out* from himself, in fellowship with other powers, he is strong.

And then, last of all and first of all, does the highest reach of man's spiritual nature tell him that he may enter into union with the Power above all powers, slip his hand into the clasp of the Hand that made the world and set all the powers in order, and holds them yet, and controls them all. Man may trust in Him and find his refuge and defence there. It is this trust in a Heavenly Father that crowns all. Here is the supreme test of what we are.

In this fuller thought now, we can set the moral power to work and find out what is our refuge, and truly judge ourselves. The narrower our trust, the poorer and meaner and less defended we are. The retreat into our poor selves is in all ways wrong. We are best hidden and covered and protected by going out from ourselves in trust. "Oh ! how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee : which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men ! Thou shalt

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hide them in the secret of Thy Presence from the pride of man : Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

But if someone has sinned : behaved shamefully in his own sight : been caught and defeated by the world, the flesh, and the devil, so that he is fairly sick of himself and very greatly disheartened : if he has been a coward, or dishonest, or cruel, and is tasting the rebukes of avenging conscience, does he do as he ought? Does he go *out* to God, out from his poisoned self to the Father? Or does he skulk away and hide himself like Adam and Eve in the garden? The proper course in sin is trust. It is better to be walking out in the cool of the day with God even then. For example, most sinners, when their folly is over, and they see their sin, would not dream of coming straight to the Holy Communion for pardon and peace. Yet that is what they ought to do.

Or again, if business goes wrong, and you are anxious and troubled in any way, and disaster of any kind besets you, what will you do? With most people that is a reason for getting away from God, staying from Church, dropping prayer. I knew a poor wretch who, if he was vexed, or crossed, would go and get drunk from sheer spite,—often, I believe, spite against God. But of course, properly, every trouble, as every sin, should count as a call to go more, and closer, to God, and to make

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Him our refuge. Why, even from a lower point of view, who does not know the relief in any trouble, of going out in sympathy for others, and how, to help others helps yourself? The going out for protection and refuge is always the right course ;—
“Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Presence.”

Yes, we need hiding, covering, sheltering in the time of adversity. But there are two ways of hiding. See the skylark, at the spring-time of the year especially : he is hidden as he stays by his own little nest on the ground ; hidden in a sort of insecure way, where any chance footfall may crush him and his home : but he is hidden, too, as he soars up into the light of the sun, and fills all the air with his joyous liquid music, and the eye strains itself in searching for him from whom all the gladness flows, and the heaven, where he is, is too bright, and you cannot find him, though you hear him still.

Higher still, and higher

From the earth thou springest,

Like a cloud of fire ;

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.*

Yes, yes ! and men, too, may hide in the dark-

* Shelley, *To a Skylark*.

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ness, and they may hide in the light. Oh! it is best to hide in God. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Presence." "Thy Presence," which is no secret, which is everywhere. "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there! if I make my bed in hell, lo! Thou art there also. Yea! the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day." And since this is so, what shall we do too but make this Eternal Presence of God our refuge, our safety, our home, our protection, and hide ourselves in the light: go out from ourselves—forget ourselves—to Him, in trust in Him: have no dark secrets, no selfish lock-up closets within us, but come to the light with our troubles, our sorrows, our fears, our sins; come to the light with the wish and in the hope that our deeds may be reproved? It is the secret of courage.

The burden of life must be borne: the only question for us is how, in what spirit, we will bear it. If it is with God's help, with conscience easy, and heart satisfied and quieted in Him, all burdens are light. It is not at any time the actual weight of life that tells; it is the spirit of worry and vexation in which it is borne. Does the happy father feel the weight of his bright, merry boy, who sits laughing and tossing on his shoulder? Does he not feel the same slender form almost too much for his strength as he carries it stiff and cold in the

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coffin? It is the spirit in which we live that makes the difference. The spirit is brave and courageous that trusts in God. Life can never be too grievous to us if it is lived in His joyous Presence; lived hidden in the light, the light of His Face. Hiding in the light! Make it a motto, a watchword.

Again, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Presence." "Thy Presence," which is a secret too. Everywhere, all seeing, all knowing, yet most secret, most private, most peculiar and individual to every soul that will seek it: a special friendship, a personal attachment, a private possession to each one, as if God were his alone, and there were no other to divide His love.

"Thou shalt hide them." Whom shall He hide? Whom is it for, this presence of God? Not for the righteous only (happy they, the faithful in thought, word, and deed!): but observe, it is those that "trust in Him before the sons of men." Trust Him, and let men see that you trust Him, and the refuge of His Presence is yours. Of course, if you hide the fact that you trust Him, you lose the benefit of the refuge. If you hide yourself, He can't hide you. It is "trust before the sons of men."

Again, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy Presence." This lastly: remember that the very soul-search by us for Him implies that He has found us long ago, before we had

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thought of Him or cared for Him. He has drawn us on to seek for Him. He has begun, and He will control, and guide thy search, till it ends in the perfect revelation, and the secret is answered, and the eternal refuge utterly found.

FALSE RESIGNATION.

"It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."—1 SAMUEL iii., 18.

14 June, 1891. 3rd Sunday after Trinity.
St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.

SURELY such an utterance as this, in the face, and imminent prospect, of great tribulation, is most consoling and strengthening! Is it not the breathing of a pure natural piety, which turns to God instinctively in trouble and need? Certain it is that people are mostly nearer to God in their sorrow. It may be that, to all of us, such a time will come when we seem to be shut up in a narrow corner in spite of all our plottings and contrivings, and there is nothing left but to be still, and submit, and cast ourselves helpless on the love and care of God. "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

The Bible is rich in examples of that supreme self-abandonment. It is indeed our dearest hope, learned from its precious pages, that there is, come what may, the Father's arm to lean upon. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return whence I came: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be

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the Name of the Lord.”* That is Job. And so the Psalmist: “I became dumb, and opened not my mouth; for it was Thy doing.”† And the Son of Man said in His agony, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”‡

In the face then of the seemingly genuine religiousness of such an appeal to God as that I have read; remembering, too, how many who are sad yet do not at all turn to Him for comfort; it appears perhaps ungracious to criticise and find fault with a state of mind in the speaker, which, in others, is so generally regarded as a virtue. Is not this utterance of Eli, the High Priest of Israel, a typical example of even Christian resignation to the will of God? What more would we have? “It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.” What more devout and faithful frame of mind could any sufferer display in pain and disappointment?

Alas! our vices are ever to be found hard by our virtues; and few indeed are the features of beauty in any character which are not at least in danger of being spoiled and defaced by some moral ugliness to match. Look to find your temptations, your weaknesses, like some noxious parasite, growing by, feeding upon, the noble traits in you. Satan would have us overdo and distort every virtue, till we make it sin. A mother speaks proudly of her

* Job i., 21. † Ps. xxxix., 10. (P.B.) ‡ St. Matt. xxvi., 39.

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son :—‘ He is different from other lads ; so steady and studious ; punctual in business ; devoted to work.’ Very well ! That is very well : only let him take care. That way, too, lies hardness and narrowness, and an engrossment in self which has ruined many a soul as fatally as reckless licence.

Or another is happy and kind and good-tempered who cannot see need and suffering without longing to relieve it. We all know the dangers of being good-tempered. The world, if it can help it, will have no one unsoured. So, eager people go too fast, and charitable people are made fools of, and careful people become niggardly, and religious people become hypocrites ; and always not far from the rose is the thorn, and from the dock-leaf is the nettle, and from the pilot-fish is the shark, and from the virtue its attendant vice.

So in the case before us. It is not so certain, when you come to examine it, that the resignation of Eli is quite the grace it looks. Indeed, it may be the most profitable result of a study of the passage that we should all avoid such resignation as that, and have none of it.

I say this then, that the frame of mind which is resigned, which says with apparent heartiness, “ It is the Lord : let Him do what seemeth Him good,” is, to some, not a grace, but a great and dangerous temptation.

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Some people are always resigning themselves; that is, in other words, always giving up battles, before they have resisted unto blood; or worse still (and this is the case with Eli), having through long years been engaged in making for themselves a hard bed and a thorny pillow, they turn round when there is nothing else to be done, and comfort themselves, as they lie down upon it, with the pious reflection that it is God's will they should be there. And though it is just, all along, by going against His will, that there has come to be such a tangle of trouble, at the end they figure as obedient servants, when they endure that which they can't help enduring, and for which they themselves are alone responsible.

I am far from saying that it is not the very best thing to be done, when you have done wrong, to bear your punishment, helped by the faith of God, in submission to His will. Nay, that is best; and so good is God, so wise His way, that the very submission does lighten the burden, does tend to relieve you of it; the very pain borne because it is God's will, does go to repair the mischief done, and to build up the fallen character again. I freely allow there is infinite hope even in the sigh of Eli. It was much the best he could do.

But let us not think that such a pass should ever have been reached, that he should have had to throw off his appointed burden upon God; that he should

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ever have got his life work into such a mess, that he must give over the management of it, and that only the drastic interference of God could get it straight. There is very little to be proud of, and for others to imitate, in this tardy acquiescence in what had become inevitable. You do not greatly admire the bankrupt who (with whatever touching expressions of submission) confides his books into the Official Receiver's hands to be put straight for him. Or when a boy has done wrong, and he reluctantly prepares himself for the visitation of the avenging rod, that is resignation : to be sure it can't be helped, it must be done; but there is no great credit in that.

The High Priest was an old man, standing on the verge of the grave ; and I say that to him the spirit of resignation had become a temptation. At the end of his life, he simply throws up his hand with a confession of failure. And it is what he has been doing all along : getting defeated : resigning himself, when he ought to have bestirred himself : yielding to opposition as insurmountable, which should have been faced and floored : using the hope and the retreat of God for his comfort in surrender, when he should have used it for refreshment to renewed effort.

God gives a man a task to do, a service to render ; (if you like) a cross, a burden, to bear. The man doesn't do the service, excuses himself

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the cross ; and then, when the service is missed, and the life is seen to be unfruitful, says to God, " Let Him do what seemeth Him good." It is only too fatally easy to submit to God in this way. But I say such resignation is sin. What ! you exclaim, granted the man's weakness and cowardice, can it ever be wrong to trust God ? Even then is it not best to trust Him ? Yes, yes ; but I say this is not trusting Him. If you trusted Him, if you really believed in Him at all, you would do something, you would not give in, you would not insult Him by saying the burden He gives you is too much for you ; you would do something which requires strength beyond your own, and see if, trusting God, you are not enabled by God to conquer instead of submitting. Resignation, true resignation, is to give yourself to be used and propelled by the invisible Force. The boat is not resigning itself when it lies on its side, useless, with a hole in it, on the beach ; that is not resignation, that is wreck ; its resignation is to commit itself to the waves, and to surmount them, and make its appointed course by their help ; and in that sense to say " Let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Now, further, why was this man so ready trustfully to say, " It is the Lord : let Him do what seemeth Him good " ? I am afraid it was this : that he was really glad, it was a

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positive relief to him, to get the responsibility of managing his futile life out of his hands, and indeed beyond his power. You see, this is the real strain and burden of life,—the responsibility in it, the need of choice, the compulsion to decide, the consciousness that the event in any case depends upon our own output of effort, and insistence, and pushing power ; when it is left to us to say what is right and wrong, what we will do ; when our future is in the making, and we are free irrevocably to fashion our own souls. This is the weight that lies upon us all. The pathos and the tragedy, the glory and the shame, of life are here.

Cannot you see (if you have never proved it for yourself) how a weak, despondent spirit might come to this ; so perplexed, so weary with inward strife, so unstrung by often failure, that he would positively prefer to endure any punishment rather than the continuance of the uphill fight? He is better able to lie still and just suffer and endure, than he is to get up and be a man, and to put out a man's dangerous capacities. You see something like it in small things, when a person will suffer excruciating agonies from tooth-ache, sooner than get up and go and have the tooth out. As I read it, I am afraid this is the motive underlying the prayer, "It is the Lord : let Him do what seemeth Him good." 'Let Him punish me, strike me, spurn me, as He will. Let my sons be killed,

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and my name become an infamy. Ah! well, that is settled; the strife is over; it is a sad business, this life of mine, leading up to, culminating in this. But now it can't be helped; the thing is done. "Let Him do what seemeth Him good." There have been people to whom the thought of going to Hell, as they say, is less terrible than the trouble involved in going to Heaven.

It is time we reviewed what is told us of Eli's life, if such an interpretation of it is to be justified. Now this comes out unmistakeably,—the genuine goodness of the man. Eli's life is at all events a blameless life. Not a word is said, not a hint is given, that it was not cleanly, and well regulated, and truly devoted to God's service. Not a breath of suspicion rests upon his sincerity. He does not say one thing, and mean, or act, another. Whatever influence he has is assuredly on the side of right. He rebukes Hannah when he thinks she has been drinking; he is honestly distressed at the behaviour of his sons; and I do not allege for a moment that there was not real unhesitating faith in the words of my text. The personal character of the man is without reproach in the Bible account of him.

From the fact of the Philistine ascendancy over Israel, it is probably right to conclude that Eli lived about the same time as Samson. Yet, placed in a most difficult position, in a wild and lawless age, when faith had almost died out, and shameless.

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profligacy everywhere prevailed, he at all events was untouched and untainted.

But more than that. You cannot read these chapters without seeing that the highest, absorbing, interest of his life is the worship of God's Sanctuary. The word of the Lord was precious in those evil days, there was no open vision:* yet there seems to be no shadow of doubt in Eli's faith and conviction of God. He, the High Priest, is simple-minded and candid to receive the warning message from a little child. Nay, he demands it—all of it—however bitter to hear: he will know: and so little is he liable to jealousy, that he himself instructs the child what to do and say, that he may receive the word of the Lord. It is as if in his sweet humility he perceived that the pure child-heart was a fitter receptacle for the Divine grace than his own. Then when the predicted judgment fell, and the Israelite host was defeated, and his sons were slain, and the ark of God was taken, it was this last woe which utterly broke the old man's heart. He listened to all the rest, dry-eyed; but when this came, when the messenger said it, so keen was he for the honour of his God, that "he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."[†]

The study of it all leaves you with this impres-

* 1 Sam. iii., 1. † 1 Sam. iv., 18.

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sion, that the man was good, but weak, and by no means equal to the work which he was called to fulfil. Had he been placed, we are tempted to think, in a lower station, and with a less responsible task, all might have been well, and he might have lived and died respectable and respected. Ah ! but just that is the very thing we are not entitled to say. Here is just where comes in the unfaith. He ought not to have been too weak for the work to which he was called. Being the High Priest of God, there was assuredly the power of God needed for that office, if he would only draw it forth. Men are never asked to be sufficient for any life-work alone and by themselves ; they are asked to be good ministers of the special grace of God.

Eli was not strong enough. He ought to have obtained from God strength sufficient for his work. He did not draw upon God in the right way. Here is the blot, so fatal, so ruinous for his peace. He resigned himself to God ; left it to God to do the service he should have done in God's strength. And so, in the end, his work, his own peculiar share that had been allotted to him to toil over and complete, remained undone ; and he departed in infinite sorrow ; good, as we have seen, with an individual, negative goodness, but—an unprofitable servant. What a sad upshot of his ninety-eight years ! He had loved God, but had done nothing in His Cause.

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Who can doubt but that long years ago, when he had first come to the Priestly Office, with its ineffable functions of communion with God, he had seen and accepted, then, the call to a noble life-work? He saw the terrible needs of the people: their unbelief, their division, their slavish submission to a foreign yoke, their profanity, their moral corruption and decay. He saw it all, and recognised that to him were entrusted the message and the grace to heal all this, and to raise up a true and God-fearing people of God. He saw it, but he did not achieve it. The earnest war against sin was not waged; the evil was not rebuked and corrected; he did not succeed in driving the enemy even from his own home, and his own sons. It was only his own soul he kept and guarded and saved, whilst in his impotence all else went wrong. The Godward side of his life was bright and true, but the manward side was utter failure. In the end he was found with faith unproved in action, no conquest by his means, no salvation for his people through him. He laid down at last a baffled and defeated life.

With the unconscious skill that is above all art, the artless writer of the story draws a contrast, and with a few delicate touches relieves the sadness of the picture by the inimitable presentation of 'the little Levite' Samuel. And in so doing he solves the problem that has been offered for our warning in Eli. Three times, with a tender and affectionate

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solicitude, he tells us of the child's steady upward growth ; and each time as he reveals some deeper stain of evil and corruption in the outer world, he falls back, as if for his own relief, on the child's free, true advance and progress. After telling of the shameless extortion of the priests under Eli, which ' made men abhor the offering of the Lord,' we read, " the child Samuel grew before the Lord."* Then after telling of Eli's feeble rebuke of the still grosser prostitution by his sons of their sacred office, the writer says again, " the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the Lord, and also with men."† And once more, after describing the earliest revealing of the Lord to Samuel, with the bitter judgment, making both the ears of all hearers to tingle, he says again, " Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground."‡

Yes ; be sure, herein is the cause of the sad fall of the one, and the joyful, triumphant progress of the other. The child grew : the old man somewhen stopped growing. But the oldest man must not stop growing, or he will also (morally and intellectually) stop living. The difference is simply here : there came a point at some time in Eli's life where his faith failed, and instead of obeying and following God, he disobeyed, and resigned himself to God. But the child grew.

* 1 Sam. ii., 17, 21. † Ver. 26. ‡ 1 Sam. iii., 11, 19.

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Samuel's was the true resignation, leaning so truly upon God, that His strong arm lifted him over all difficulties ; and still he went on unchecked in his perfect submission, waxing greater in spiritual stature.

This is the true human life : a growth from grace to grace, from strength to strength : not the output of any gigantic force or any super-human courage : nothing at all that any one of us is incapable of ; but just the attentive ear, listening for God's word, and then the obedient answer, the pliant acquiescence of the whole being. " Speak Lord ! for Thy servant heareth."* There is no defeat for such, he is strong to overcome with the strength of God.

Oh ! give me Samuel's ear,
The open ear, O Lord !
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word :
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all.

Oh ! give me Samuel's heart,
A lowly heart, that waits
Where in Thy House Thou art,
Or watches at Thy gates :
By day and night a heart that still
Moves at the breathing of Thy will. †

Such Obedience alone is Power : such Resignation alone is Conquest.

* 1 Sam. iii., 9, 10. † Hy. A. and M. 574.

THE SPEECH OF GOD.

“ *God . . . hath spoken.* ”—HEBREWS I., 2.

25 December, 1893. Christmas Day.
St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.

THE Speech of God ! What shall it be ? To what can we compare it ? Speech is the means of communication of soul with soul by human language : the expression of thought, in certain forms, which renders the thoughts of one heart intelligible to others. And speech among beings of the same nature and kind, familiar and accountable as it is, is still, and must ever be, most wonderful. But the Speech of God ! How can He address Himself to us ? How utter Himself so as to be understood ? When even the marvel of human language falls far short of clearly revealing all the directing mind ; when in its utmost perfection misapprehension is frequent and inevitable, and it can be used as readily to mislead as to explain ; when this is so between minds of the same narrow order, which know each other, and know their own goodness and badness, and so can, from experience of self, track the twistings and turnings of other minds ;—when speech is so imperfect a medium between us, how can it exist between us and Him ?

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How may we appropriate the intelligence of Eternal Wisdom, and Holiness, and Love? How is He to make sinful men conceive what is in His mind? How can God speak to us?

And it is as apprehending the difficulty here involved that the Bible describes and characterises the Speech of God. Again and again, in Ezekiel and in the Book of the Revelation,* the Divine Voice is described as "like the sound of many waters." I take it, there is a very deep meaning in that description. The Speech of God is not, as indeed it could not be, from the nature of the case, an articulate utterance; the Speech of God must transcend our speech; it cannot be so simple and empty as ours. Of infinite depth and significance it must be; such as will employ an eternity of time and spiritual growth for us to spell out; not tied down to one immediate, and definite, and local meaning, fitting to just the one occasion and no other: but every touch and breath of God's Presence and Person must carry with it the fragrance of Heaven and Eternity.

So all a man can say is, it is like some infinite sound of Nature, which you can partly read and interpret, but which yet is too full and rich and deep for our glosses and paraphrases; which entrances you with its mystery and glamour, but

* Ezek. i., 14; xliii., 2; Rev. i., 15.

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tantalisés you with its infinity. It is that which means more in accordance with the capacity of the soul that receives it, and ever promises more than any soul can receive. "As the sound of many waters." There is the music of babbling brook and tinkling rill ; there is the soft patter and swish of the Spring shower on the grass ; there is the murmur and roar of a waterfall ; there is the heave and roll of the mighty billows in mid-ocean ; the clang and crash of monster waves upon the shore. A Voice, speaking in tones manifold like these, now soothing, now terrific—the many waters ! and ever unintelligible, because surcharged with too much meaning :—such the Voice of God ; the Speech of God !

Catching the spirit of the Bible, our own last poet, when he would describe the answer of God to the passionate, yearning questionings of human souls—an answer which must be too full and deep for our comprehension,—also fled to nature to describe it :

" [To them] an answer peal'd from that high land,
But in a tongue no man could understand ;
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn."*

As before, "the many waters," so here the language of the dawn is like "the Speech of God."

* Tennyson ; *The Vision of Sin*, v.

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But nevertheless, for all the impossibility of fully understanding the utterance of God, the great statement stands on the page of God, "God hath spoken." He has expressed Himself, uttered Himself, for our learning ; and we may at least begin to draw near to His Heart by deciphering the alphabet and syllables of what He has said. What is it, the supreme word and message and communication that has come to us from God ? Because we notice that the writer is alluding to some grand and unique speech of God, and he contrasts it, to shew its extraordinary dignity, with mere fragmentary utterances before : " God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us." That is to say, this last speech is not, like them, fragmentary and local, but final and for all time.

And this contrast further puts us on the line of perceiving the nature of the Speech of God. What shall it be, I ask again, the Speech of God ? Not a mere utterance by human throat and lips of articulate syllables, ephemeral, vanishing like the breath which gives them sound : not, though that, in its expression of awe and mystery, more resembles it to our little minds, not the greatest or sweetest sounds of Nature : but, in God's speech the syllables making up His Word to men are themselves the lives of holy men. All their aspiration and desire and obedience, all the spiritua

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part, the excellence, the true beauty of human souls,—these form words of God, declaring His message. “God hath spoken in time past ~~by~~ ^{by} the prophets.” The lives of Joseph, of David, of Elijah ;—more was known of God through them ; God spoke through them. They are words of God. All their struggle, and effort to overcome what held them back, and to reach to God, all this makes God known. Living words they are ; words with hands and feet, and appealing eyes and loving hearts. Good men are God’s words.

But even that wonderful speech was imperfect. The language used could not, even as far as it went, perfectly declare the mind of God. “He spake through them.” They could not be perfect organs of His inspiration. They were still frail and darkened men, and their minds necessarily coloured the message that passed through them. It remained for a later day, when the fulness of time was come, for God to provide a perfect, transparent, undarkened medium of His utterance and speech to men. Then, still, even more infinitely above and beyond our comprehension will the Speech of God be : but then, also, the confusion, the misapprehension, the inadequacy will be no longer at all in the medium, in the language of God, that is, in the life which composes the syllables of the message ; but solely and entirely in the hearers, who cannot

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read and understand the full power and sweetness of that marvellous Word.

“God, Who in time past spake by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” His Son is the Word of God. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” The Speech of God still is a life ; but now a perfect life, human and Divine. It is God’s Word to us. Now indeed God hath spoken. Oh ! friends, we are called to listen to the Word, the language of God. The Eternal, the Almighty, the Lord of Heaven and earth, the Creator, the Spirit of Life looks upon us and addresses us. The blazing eyes, like a flame of fire, piercing to our depths and revealing the innermost crannies of our being, are fixed upon us ; and He speaks to us each by name. How terrible ! Miserable creatures ! How we shall shrivel and wither before Him when He speaks !

What fearful earthquake, what tornado, leveling in its march the forest of a thousand years, what mighty fire and glare of Hell, leaping with giant rush and roar, licking up and consuming all that comes in its reach, what other marvel of Nature, can compare with the Speech of the Eternal God, Who made and controls them all—His playthings and puppets—making known His awful, holy Will to His rebellious creatures ? Ah ! more awful still than sights and sounds like these, when the great God speaks His closest speech to man ! No symbol

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of Nature's grandeur can really compare to the actual Truth. The sound of many waters is but a faint foreshowing of the tremendous reality. For not in nature's extremest crash of earthquake, nor in her deadliest hiss of fire, is the Speech of God known; but in the still small voice, the little muffled wailing cry of a new-born baby, coming forth naked into the world. It is that Eternal, Almighty, All-Holy God, beginning to live amongst us: a little child from a maiden-mother's womb.

“God hath spoken in His Son!” Is there any known force to break stiff tough hearts, like this? To bend and soften hard and obstinate wills, to change the very ground-work of human character, like this utterance of God in the life of Jesus Christ?

That,—the Birth, the Life, the Death of the Incarnate Son of God,—is God's word to men. Still, as of old, He speaks in a life. Not now the imperfect life of the best men who ever have lived, but the absolutely perfect life of Jesus Christ. And it is for us to spell out that message bit by bit; to cause our own natures to grow up God-like by communion with the Word of God; to listen with all our powers to God's speech. What does God say? He says Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God's message to us: God's appeal, His pleading, His warning, His comfort, His support. Jesus Christ is the comment of God upon this sad world. What

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does God say to our conduct? He says Jesus Christ. If you would know God's word, attend to Christ and you will hear it: the voice as the sound of many waters.

At this glad Christmas time we rejoice in God's gift to us of the little Child of Bethlehem, Emmanuel, God with us. Thanks be to Him Who has spoken; Who has saved us from the freezing silence, the callous disregard of this world, without God; saved us from the despair of sin and loneliness and self, and brought us in to the light and the warmth and the sunshine of the fellowship of His dear Son.

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“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.”—ST. LUKE XXI., 33.

9 December, 1894. 2nd Sunday in Advent.

St. Cuthbert's, Bensham.

THE Church system of services is such that it secures that all subjects of importance shall be brought before us in turn. We are not tempted to put all our theology in every sermon, because we have only to wait patiently, to take things as they come, and we find that one by one all the great points and features of our religious belief are presented duly for our thought. The Church system is least of all a system of concealment: it has no interior mysteries; it invites inspection; it asks for thought. For instance, at this time we are thinking about the Advent. So between now and Christmas the Church encourages us to meditate upon diverse means of preparation for the coming of Christ. To-day it is the Scriptures which are brought before us in Collect, Epistle, and Gospel: the Bible, as a means of preparing for the Advent. Let me say something to-night about the Bible.

Generally, in thinking of subjects of this kind,

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of the first importance to the Christian Faith, we find two ways lie open before us. There is a level road, and an uphill road. We find on the one hand some simple and easily intelligible theory, direct and definite and unmistakeable. And the simplicity of it is its recommendation ; it demands no effort of the understanding ; it is plain to the meanest comprehension. But on the other hand there seem, when we look closer, to be considerations which forbid this rough and ready method of escaping all difficulties. We find that the problem is a complex one after all, and we must not be too rash to settle it ; but that all powers of our minds and hearts must be called into play for its solution.

So here, the simplest, easiest theory of the Scripture for Christian people, is that it is merely and purely a Divine book ; a direct and uniform message from God to us, whose every syllable is His utterance, and absolutely and equally binding on all men. That would save such a lot of trouble ! When the Bible pronounces, all other voices are silent. God Himself has spoken, and discussion ceases in face of direct and immediate revelation. Whoever does not accept this view of the Word of God, does not in any real sense believe in God at all ! “Touch one syllable of the Bible,” said a good Christian man to a Biblical critic, “and I wouldn’t pick it up out of the gutter.” It is God’s Word ; Divine, every letter of it ; or it is nothing,

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and not to be believed. Ah ! men, weak-minded, half-hearted men, are always craving for some absolutely final decree and court of appeal, which shall relieve them of the trouble and responsibility of deciding for themselves.

But, my friends, you must not evade your human lot and discipline in that way. God puts us here to become rational, self-determining creatures ; to acquire God-like powers of will and judgment. An infallible Bible is no more God's wish for us than an infallible Church: those who ask for either are simply cowards, whose blind faith is truly the uttermost, blankest scepticism. If they knew it, such people are saying, 'make me quite sure, I beg ; because if you don't I shall lose my faith in God.' I don't call that faith at all. I don't believe in God because any person or any book tells me God is. I believe in God because of what He is to me. Oh ! and because of what it would be without Him.

The Bible is not to Christians as the silver image of Diana which fell down from Heaven to the Ephesians. That is not the way we have received it. That theory, when we come to examine it, we find is not a true theory. The Bible is made up of books, written by very different men, living in very different ages. And the word, the message, of God comes to us always, not direct from God to us, but through them. That is the simple fact. It passes first through the minds of erring, ignorant

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men, and is often coloured by what is in their minds. It is all mixed, God's message, and man's limitations of God's message. What they say we have to interpret, and to decide for ourselves what is of God and what is of man. These are the two ways of regarding the Bible, the easy way and the true way.

Now, from this proposition consequences follow. First of all, the Bible is not an oracle and should not be used so. The heathen world believed in oracles. In any difficulty or anxiety men would send to consult the oracle, and expect to have the event foretold. The Bible is not that. It is not a magic book, a book of fate. We read of even so sane a man as John Wesley deciding important steps and questions by opening his Bible and trusting to the first verse that met his sight to reveal God's will. I do not think we have any right to engage God in a game of chance without His consent. The Bible is not meant for that : the writers did not mean, and never dreamt of, such a thing. Indeed, it is not the book that is inspired but the men ; and we must discover, not chance applications to ourselves of words really intended to mean something else, but the true original meaning of the writer ; and then, if you wish, infer, apply, to your own case and circumstances.

Take one example out of any number that might be used. Take that verse that was read

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in one of the lessons the Sunday before last. We read in the Book of Ecclesiastes,* “Where the tree falleth there it shall be.” Now what the writer actually meant by that was, that the chance fall of a tree, or better, of a divining rod, was of no value or significance. People were trusting to magic and soothsaying; and one of their tests and ordeals was to watch the fall of a tree, or of the divining rod when tossed into the air (just as people now spin a coin), and be ruled by the fall of it. ‘No,’ says the preacher in Ecclesiastes, ‘take no note of such foolishness: as the rod falls so let it be; it tells you nothing; it is only a stick.’ But how have Christian people again and again used that text? They have regarded it as the Bible statement of a most important theological doctrine. The Bible says it! They don’t stop to ask what the Bible really does say and mean; or rather (for this is the point) what the particular writer of Ecclesiastes meant; but they choose to regard it as the declaration of the Word of God, that as a man dies so he will be; and that there is no further probation after this life. “As the tree falls so must it lie,”† they say, applying it to a subject to which it has no reference whatever.

Again, people will refer to the Bible as a

* xi., 3.

† The words are familiar in this form from Caswell’s hymn “Days and moments.” [See Appendix to the original Edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 375.]

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sort of Book of Fate, to predict the course of history and the end of the world. I always regard with profound suspicion people who revel chiefly in the obscurest, and, to modern Europeans, most unintelligible, prophecies of Daniel, or Revelation! But they value these books more than all the Gospels and Epistles. Save me from all the tribe of Anglo-Israelites and Milleniumists, and Latter-day Prophets, and New Apostles, and the faddists who make the Bible the happy hunting ground of all the strange flora and fauna of their own prodigal imaginations!

And in the same way in everything: we must not make the Bible say what it does not say. We must study it, and not only refer to it; and ask 'What is the real meaning of this? What did the writer mean when he wrote it? How was God dealing with him? What is God saying to me through him?'

Well then, in the second place. Keeping that in mind, I say further that we are not to expect the Bible to speak (and that is, to expect the men who wrote the Bible to speak) in terms of knowledge in advance of their own age. They will convey to us God's message through what they at the time were, and knew. Then we shall by no means be surprised and perplexed if inspired writers in the Bible do not know what we know, and speak only at the level of their own time as re-

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gards a scientific knowledge of the world. If the Bible were the verbally inspired Word of God, we should be grievously perplexed to hear God saying that the world was made in six days; or that the sun, moon, and stars are fixed in the firmament; or that the sun goes round the earth. But when we consider that God does not anticipate men's discovery in these matters, and that the writers of the Bible had to depend in such cases on the knowledge simply of their own time, we shall not expect that they should speak differently from the men of their own time. Their message is not in a knowledge of these things.

If you ask me what then was their message, palpably and evidently Divine, and inspired by God, I do not hesitate a moment to tell you. I find it in the revelation of truths wholly unknown, and indeed inconceivable, to the world at that time : truths directly contrary to all that men universally believed. I find it in the revelation of God as good, and holy, and just, and one, and a spirit, and a person, amid the universal belief that the gods were unjust, and cruel, and many, and to be worshipped in idols and symbols, or in the powers of Nature. I find it still more in the consistent declaration, through ages, of the belief that He had chosen one family, and hence one nation, to be the priests of humanity, to declare His truth to all mankind : and that He had made,

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through them, an everlasting covenant with men that cannot be broken : and that He was training them, moulding them, through the ages to His purpose. I find it most of all in the sacrificial worship of the Scriptures, training and pointing on to the great Atonement of Jesus Christ: a sacrificial worship the direct opposite and contradiction of the holocausts of the heathen; inasmuch as it was an expression of submission that His righteous will should be done, and not a bribe to God to spare His creatures, whom He hated, or an inducement to Him to let them do their own will instead of His.

I, for one, am wholly at a loss for these pure and noble truths springing up among, low, gross, wicked men, save on the faith that He Himself taught them, inspired them, as they said He did. Did they claim to have produced these truths themselves? They denied it. They did not want to receive them. But He made them declare His Name. And in that is the revelation of God in the Bible.

Thirdly, I want you to see that really, however vital and essential is the possession and study of the Bible (and it is vital and essential to true, pure Christian life), yet after all our faith does not entirely depend on the Bible, in the sense that, if we lost the Bible, or any part of it, we should lose God our Father, and Christ our Redeemer. I think now-a-days this is a very important point. Of course, ordinary Church-going people cannot

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be expected to follow and study the course of Biblical criticism and investigation. I wish they could; that then they might see for themselves how shallow and slender very often are the grounds on which the Scriptures are assailed; and how, in the result, a deeper and truer knowledge is now swinging back to full confidence in the genuineness and trustworthiness of all the books. But ordinary people cannot do this: and the mere fact that doubts are expressed by leading scholars, and that all scholars have for long been seriously engaged in considering theories of reconstruction of the books of Scripture,—all this throws a sort of shadow of doubt and uncertainty over the whole subject; and people do not know what they should believe and what not. And the result too often is that, for all practical purposes, men are deprived of their Bibles, and of their Faith. Therefore, although we do not in the very least give in to anything they say, I think, nevertheless, we are bound to ask ourselves what, if what they say could turn out to be true, and they could (which they can't) make it certain that some books of the Bible are not what they profess to be,—what then? Or what if we had no Bible at all,—what then? It is an absolutely absurd proposition: but I want to see what, even under so extreme a disadvantage as that, we should have left. What would be left?

Why, everything! What would it matter as

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regards our Christian Faith? In one sense it would not matter at all. Our Faith does not really depend on the Bible. We depend on Christ: and nothing, nothing, nothing, can take away Christ from the soul that knows and believes in Him. A moment's thought shews this: that He is a reality to us, independent of everything else in the world. Through Him we have escaped sins, and the power of them; through Him we have attained peace and confidence; and on Him depends entirely our own progress, our own capacity to rise in the scale, and be worthy of ourselves. Without Him we sink. Shall I deny the power that raises me from the brute? I cannot. It is stronger than I.

You might as well talk of giving up the power of gravitation! You might give it up, but it won't give you up. We can no more give Christ up and go back to be without Him, than we can retrace our spent years, undo our past acts, and be babies again. What has brought us so far? The Bible? Certainly not. The Bible has greatly helped; but the Faith, the news of God, the knowledge of Christ, the power of prayer, and of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the Christian Church,—this is all independent of everything,—an eternal fact. The proposition is, as I said, absurd: because we are not going to lose the Bible. But it is well to see clearly that our Faith depends on nothing outside Christ

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Himself. Think it over, and you will see that there is no cause for anxiety on that score.

I have been saying what the Bible is not. Think for a moment more of what it is. Avoiding the wrong use of it, we can better apply ourselves to the right use of it.

First of all, in the Old Testament we have a Divine commentary on National Life. The veil is lifted and we see the secret inner working of History. People sometimes, nay often, slight and put aside the Old Testament. The fact is, that only as we have the grace to become truly a nation ourselves, have we the sense and the capacity to value the Old Testament. We are beginning to understand it. There are some things as to which, if you wish, you may rightly suspend judgment; but I speak of the drift and sense of the whole: and I say, here is God's message to us how to be truly national, what to avoid, what to seek. No problem of our time but is illustrated, illuminated, by the Old Testament. And it is not only the Nation, but the Church, the society of the covenant people, that receives guidance from the Old Testament. Our work, our worship, our social faith are all illuminated here. It gives us the laws of life as a Society.

Then, secondly, we have throughout the Bible the teaching of God to man about sin: what it is, how to escape it, and be free from it. We use any instrument for what it is for, and not for what it is

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not for. We do not use the telescope for examining God's tiny wonders, nor the microscope for sweeping the horizon of a glorious prospect. So the Bible must be used for what it is for. It is not meant to teach us science, but to instruct us in right and wrong. The Bible declares to us the very essence of our own being. It enters into our consciences and puts them right, and gives us that peace without which life is misery. Here, in the Bible, we are ever in the presence of a Holy Being : we cannot escape it, until we do not want to escape it. What other book so rivets that impression? The apprehension of God is what lends a unity to the whole varied book.

And so, thirdly, the great, the enormous value of the Bible is that it, as nothing else, gives us a knowledge of God, brings us into a spiritual world, realises to us the quest and the desire of all life, reveals to our souls our souls' dear Lord. By means of it we go back into the very Presence of Jesus, and cherish His own words. In every question as to what we should believe or how we should act, we can by means of the Bible enter into the spirit of Christ and His Disciples, and we can apply that great safeguard of a pure faith, the rule of the English Church, that nothing is to be required as of Faith but what can be proved out of Holy Scripture. Through the Bible we know what they who were next to the eternal Truth, believed,

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and what they did not believe. Yes, this above all, that the Bible is a sacrament of Christ. Through it we receive from him spiritual food. If you seem to have lost Christ, see if it is not that you have ceased to listen for His voice speaking to your heart and conscience through the Bible. No one can long really read the Bible and remain in doubt about Christ. All Christian experience tells us that it is only one short step from His Word to Himself. But a thin veil of sense hangs between, and if we will pass on, He draws the veil aside.

The study of His Word brings out our need and its remedy ; then we know ourselves truly ; to Him do we come with our shame and our sorrows through His Word.

“Straight to Thy Presence get me, and reveal it,
Nothing ashamed of tears upon Thy feet ;
Show the sore wound, and beg Thine Hand to heal
it,

Pour Thee the bitter, pray Thee for the sweet.
Then with a ripple and a radiance through me,
Rise and be manifest, O Morning Star !
Flow on my soul, Thou Spirit, and renew me ;
Fill with Thyself, and let the rest be far.”*

And all this—the right use of God’s Word—will prepare us for His coming again : for “the heaven and the earth shall pass away : but His words shall not pass away.”

* F. W. H. Myers, *St. Paul*.

CYRUS FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE.

"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron."—ISAIAH XLV., 2.

28 November, 1897. Advent Sunday. St. Cuthbert's, Bensham.

THE strange thing about this prophecy is that it is addressed to a heathen King. Isaiah foretells the greatness of the Conqueror Cyrus. The Lord "saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure . . . Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him."* It is as if the hope and trust of the Lord is gone off from the chosen people and centres itself on the great world-conqueror instead. To Cyrus are applied the titles and expressions consecrated to Israel's Kings and Israel's hope. "I will go before thee [Cyrus] and make the crooked places straight." It is the same as saying of Cyrus what was said of the Christ: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."† The heathen Cyrus is the coming

* Is. xlv., 28, xlv. i. † Is. xl., 3.

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King, and he is called, by the Lord, "My shepherd," even "My anointed," that is, "My Messiah." And yet we know that Cyrus, the Oriental despot, did not himself in any way recognise allegiance to the God of Israel, or reciprocate the Messianic Hope.

This prophecy, then, is a striking witness to the claim of God's Providence. All men, even His foes, are creatures in His omnipotent hands, and work out His Will. His Will is done eventually—is in process of being effected now—even by those who acknowledge no allegiance to Him, and never consciously obey Him. All things work together to accomplish God's Purpose. "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."* God calls to His friends, those who claim to be His disciples, and gives them their work to do, their witness to bear: and they go forth, and fail in their service, through lack of faith and effort, and, may be, grow cold and careless in it. Well! then He has other agents to send. His work goes forward, His Will is done, if not with, and by, them, then without them. The world thinks it is managing itself, and all the time He is over-ruling it, controlling it, so that it brings forth the issue He desires and resolves to have. Even the ruthless autocrat Cyrus is a mere puppet in the hands of Eternal Wisdom.

* *Hamlet*, A. v., Sc. ii.

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I press this thought now because I think it appropriate to Advent. The thought of the Advent compels us to realise how after all only God rules God's world.

It is like children out for their quarter of an hour's play. They have their little leaders, their mimic warfare, and they enter into it as if it were the business of life, and they were all their own masters. But presently another master, the real master, rings a bell, and, at once, the play ceases, the eager cries are hushed, the bustling feet are stilled. Such children are we for all our self-esteem.

When we look at the world and the activity of men in it, and note the progress, the advance in knowledge and power, we almost come to imagine that we have control of its destiny, and can shape its policy, and create its history ; or at least we put far away the notion that there is any other agency at work in these directions than ours. We neither suppose that we can have any outside help to trust to, nor any over-mastering power above our own to reckon with.

But when we look to the end of things, our part, our influence upon it, seems very small. When we think of Christ coming again to judge the world, what voice, what say have we in that? Does He ask us about that? Do we know anything? Rather do we not see that behind the

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screen of our life and doings, all the time God is managing and governing,—preparing the world for its great catastrophe, which will be, not when we expect or think the time is come, but when He sees that all is ready and the age is complete.

Cyrus, the great world-ruler, conscious only of himself and his own selfish designs and interests, the deadly foe of Israel, and indeed of every independent force, was all the time God's servant in spite of himself. God led him ; God gave him his success that he thought his own, and for His own end, God 'broke in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron,' in order that he might do for God, and not for himself, the work God willed to have done. The world was as ignorant of the truth as he was, till the prophet of God revealed the true spring of history.

And the same truth comes out again, even more clearly when, looking down the page of history, past the day of Cyrus and the return from the captivity, we come on to the time of the first Christians—the first Advent of Christ. How all men then mis-read the true history of that time ! They thought of the proud empire of Rome, and the invincible might of her armies ! Little did they think that all their history was in truth subordinate to the appearance of one little Child in a distant and obscure province of the vast Empire ! That He, that little One, the Lamb of God, coming in among

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the fierce wolves of the world, was its Lord and Ruler, and Judge to be, for Whom all the world waited, and for Whom all had for ages past unknowingly prepared ! What could be a more complete illustration of what I am saying, that outside of man's purpose, is God's purpose, which prevails ?

On the Cross of Jesus, just above His sacred Head, there hung, for all to read, the true indictment of the offence that had brought Him there :— “ Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews,” written, says St. John,* “ in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek.” And that faithfully declared (though nobody knew it) His true relation to all the great families of the world. Nothing seemed so unlikely : but He was their King ; the true successor of Cyrus. But we, looking back, see how all the world, while thinking of anything rather than that, had been preparing for Him.

Glance in turn at the three, and see how it was with them, as it was with Cyrus. Each according to its own nature prepared the way for Christ.

(1) Take the Hebrews first, and see how their characteristic impress, writ plain for all to see, heralded His coming. What was the special influence of the Jew upon mankind ? The Jew, more than any other, taught the world the majesty of conscience, the demand of duty, the sense of right and wrong. The Law was the one great

* xix., 20. (R.V.)

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educator of conscience. The chosen people were the one witness to that. They existed to assert the moral government of God on themselves and all nations. Other peoples had practically no conscience till taught it by Israel. This was what gave vitality to the sense of covenant with God, and the choice of Israel as His peculiar people. They taught mankind the need and the glory of doing right.

And at last they reached a point when they could go no higher, and began to fall back. They could declare the right ; they could not accomplish it. They seemed just to have educated man's conscience so far as to set it up as man's tormentor, without giving the power at the same time to obey its behests, and life became a miserable bondage to conscience ; no joyous and triumphant service, satisfying man's deepest need ; and the Jew was fast becoming simply puerile and absurd with superstition, and religious foolishness. Religion was become an ogress, instead of a goddess.

But then, just when the message of the Jew was played out, when its last word had been spoken, and Judaism, having conspicuously failed, was falling away into corruption, then Christ came. Judaism had prepared the way for Christ in giving the world the sense of the moral law of the government of God. All the known world was scattered over with dispersed Jews meeting in their syna-

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gogues in every town ; all, like so many mouths, gaping wide for the word of Christ. Then, as the husk of Jewish legalism fell away, the kernel of the gospel of Christ was there to take its place.

Did the Jews know they were preparing the way for Christ? They were doing so, but they knew nothing about it.

(2) But the claim of the sovereignty of Jesus was written in Latin too : and as with Jerusalem, so with Rome. At the coming of Christ, the Roman Empire had just attained the top rung of the ladder of Empire. All the world was one Roman Kingdom. The world was a unity, if a unity of violence. Roman roads led straight as a line to and from every part of the world. The Roman name was everywhere feared. One system of law everywhere prevailed, and that, the basis and foundation of our English laws to-day ; the noblest code the world has seen.

And yet their grand conception of a harmonised world under one government, in the very hour of its triumph had conspicuously failed. It just fell to the ground by its own weight. It was fatally weak just where Judaism was strong. It had no notion of right. Roman society was rotten to the core : foul with a viciousness we can hardly imagine ; no faith, no hope, no sense of right or truth, or God. All the old paganism had ceased to hold men, and there was no religious belief to take

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its place. The Law now exacted worship of the Emperor in default of a better god. Home was unspeakably gross ; slavery universal. Rome failed absolutely in all the objects of its ambition and striving.

What Rome did do, was to prepare the face of the world for the spread everywhere of the gospel of Christ ; to prepare the heart of the world, out of sheer need and desperation, to welcome Him as Saviour and Redeemer. The Apostles could go everywhere with at least tolerable safety and punctuality ; and everywhere some hearts at least ached for the knowledge of Jesus.

Did the Romans know they were preparing the way for Christ ? They were doing so, but they knew nothing about it.

(3) And then, besides Jews, besides Romans, the Greeks had prepared the way for Christ. The Greeks had simply thought of everything else as an answer to man's need, except a Revelation from God Himself. The Greeks did in the sphere of mind and intellect what the Jews did in the sphere of morals, and the Romans did in the sphere of practical life. If the Jews worked on the soul of mankind, and the Romans on its body, the Greeks worked on its mind and intellect. Theirs are the great systems of philosophy ; theirs the artists and authors and sculptors of the world. Music, indeed, the ancient world knew nothing about : but they

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had tasted deep of all the beauty of Nature. One thing they had done was to teach all the world the Greek language, so that one tongue was known all over the world.

But now all was of no avail to save mankind from despair. Learning itself assured them there was no hope. Every device of man's brain was exhausted ; and, at the end, man was more miserable than ever. Of course ! They wanted Christ ;—His message of pardon, and peace with God, and holiness, and eternal life. Just then, when the need was the sorest and the winter night the blackest, He came.

Did the Greeks know they were preparing the way for Christ ? They were doing so, but they knew nothing about it.

On every side, every plan and ambition of man had failed. In that which they toiled for and longed for, ever they reached a certain point, and then fell back, baffled and defeated. But, unknown to them, God had over-ruled all they did, to prepare the world for the first Advent of Christ. All contributed, in spite of themselves, to make the world just ready, at the right time, for Jesus to live and die in it ; for the everlasting gospel of Jesus to spring and grow in it.

“ I will go before thee,” said God to each world-power in turn, “ and make the crooked places straight ; I will break in pieces the gates of brass,

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and cut in sunder the bars of iron." "Thou, O Cyrus, art (whether thou likest it or not), My shepherd, My anointed, and shalt perform all My pleasure."

And now we are looking forward to the Second Advent ; the return of the Risen Lord to judge the world. And do you not think it shall be the same still ? That the vast powers of the world, the steam crushers in the concert of nations, bent exclusively on smashing out their coveted fortunes for themselves, shall really help just to prepare the way for the Second Coming of Christ, whether they mean to, or wish to, or not ?

Only this conviction—awful, weighty, solemn, awe-inspiring—with its travail of responsibility, forces itself upon one : that, whatever has been with other nations in time long past, and in all the quarters of the world, a thousandfold more is all this true of us, citizens of a vaster Empire than the world has ever seen. You remember that chapter we read the other Sunday about Nebuchadnezzar in his pride of possession of the vast power of Babylon, when, in his pride, he was changed in mind, till he thought himself a beast and ate grass like an ox. I tried in curiosity to lay upon the map a piece of paper to cover that Empire of old, and then compared it with the British Empire of to-day, and, behold, the new is at least ten times greater than the old !

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It has been said by one well-fitted to judge, that if the Empire holds together for another century, the English tongue will be spoken by every inhabitant of the globe. And does not all this, must it not, force on us the conviction that as to Jew and Roman and Greek it was given to prepare the way for the First Advent of Christ, so in altogether a special and peculiar sense, it is given to the English-speaking race to prepare the way for the Second Advent?

I say, whether we like it, or whether we do not! We may fall in with it; and once, just once, for the first time and the last, give the only example of a people obediently, gratefully, faithfully, pushing forward the purpose of God. Or we may stick to the example of all that lived and died before us; follow our own low lust of conquest and self-aggrandisement, without thought or care for the message we must give. Whatever we do, the result is the same, and to our condemnation or to our salvation, we shall usher in the Coming of the Lord!

O fast-fixed Fate! O tremendous Destiny! How shall we bear ourselves? It is not our doing that wider and wider grows the circle of British influence. We do not mean it, any more than we can arrest it. It is the Lord securing for Himself a sphere, a platform (so to speak) for His Return. All we can do, if we wish, is to try with all our might that our work in the world shall not be the

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insensate blundering of a Cyrus, but the intelligent acquiescence of Christ's Apostles. We can strive that everywhere the Gospel of Christ goes before the armed host, that the armed host itself shall be Christian and not heathen.

For this we can pray as on the great day of Intercession observed throughout the world next Sunday ; to this we can give of our means. I am told it is true that the total sum of money given in this country for the work of Christian Missions is not quite so great as is spent by us every year in Christmas cards ! And that does not look as if, as a people, we were greatly set on preparing the world for Christ's Coming. Yet it is true to say that, with trifling exceptions, it is only the English-speaking race that does anything at all. It is not much ; but then Christ never has got much from the world for which He died.

Little we can do ; let us do it : at least be found watching, expecting, desiring, the day of His Return. Whether we will or no, we too are preparing for, hasting unto the Coming of the Lord. The Bridegroom surely comes, whether we wake or sleep. Let us awake ! Let us stand with loins girded and lamps burning !* “ The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”†

* Cp. St. Luke xii., 35 ; Eph. vi., 14. † Rom. xiii., 12.

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"Then said David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand."—1 SAMUEL XXX., 23.

27 January, 1898. Durham Junior Clergy Society.
Durham Cathedral.

O H ! that I might learn, drawing near to the closer Presence of my Lord, a clearer knowledge of His Will for me, and of the service He seeks at my hands !

It is one of the wonders of God's Word that its simple narratives of events of long ago find applications in the issues of to-day, and illuminate problems perplexing to us. God speaks again in the Bible as He spoke of old, and His words mean more to those who seek more from them. I do not say there is no danger of misusing God's Word. Every keen and delicately-tempered instrument can be turned against a rash or unskilful manipulator. But we are bidden to be workmen unashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;* and we stand the risk.

A point arose in the warfare of the King, and

* 2 Tim. ii., 15.

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the settlement of it gave a solemn sanction for Israel, and established a principle for the later Church. Once when David and his men returned to their camp at Ziklag, "behold it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep."* Then, what was considerably more to the purpose, they pursued hot-foot after the enemy. So fast they went that two hundred fell out exhausted, and had to be left behind. David caught up the robbers, punished their aggression, and recovered his relations and their belongings. Then when all were safely home again, a question arose as to the division of the spoil, and the right to share in it of those who had been left behind.

The sons of Belial, of course (as you would expect of the sons of Belial), acting on strictly business principles, were for an ungenerous policy of exclusion: "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil that we have recovered."† But David decided otherwise: "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us . . . For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from

* 1 Sam. xxx., 3, 4. † Ver. 22.

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that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.”*

It did not seem to be quite relevant ; for the two hundred had not been left in charge of the stuff ; but the principle was clear. There were two precedents for it. For Moses had said, “ Divide the prey into two parts ; between them that took the war upon them, who went out to battle, and between all the congregation.”† And Joshua had said to the half tribe of Manasseh, “ Divide the spoil of your enemies with your brethren.”‡

The principle is, that there are differences of function ; each one has his special work to do ; if he does it, he wins the battle, though he never strikes a blow. The battle is won by everyone doing faithfully his own allotted task, however remote it seems from the clash of actual warfare. He that tarrieth with the stuff has an equal share in the victory ; it is as much due to him as to the actual fighter.

I watched the launch of a lifeboat in a storm the other day ; something stuck, and the vessel could not be got off her truck. Near by, stood men with the rocket apparatus ; they itched to go and help with the ropes, they fretted to bear a hand ; but their share in the launch was to be ready with the rocket as soon as the boat was in the water, and

* Verses 23—25. † Num. xxxi., 27. ‡ Josh. xxii., 8.

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the way to get the thing done properly was for everyone to do his own work. They helped by letting the ropes alone: by letting others pull the ropes.

Soldiers in the army of the King of Hosts have a different object of ambition from David's freebooters. The 'prey' with them, the guerdon of reward, is not any possession for themselves; it is the prize of a high calling, a task, a service, a ministry, to accomplish, simply to please Him. And the moral of the story is, that we win that prize, that is, we render that service, by leaving the part of the others to the others, and limiting ourselves to our own part. "As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff." Lo! it is a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day.

And as for us, who are Priests and ambassadors of Christ,—it is for us to realise clearly what our special work is, and not to allow ourselves to be turned aside from it by calls to other work which looks more attractive or more necessary.

This principle, like every other, must be tested and proved by comparing it with the perfect life of duty and service. When I look with this object at Christ's Life, I see that the temptation which is frequent for me, was not absent from Him, Who was tempted in all points like as we are. Our Blessed Lord was often asked to forsake the allotted task to

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which, for the time, He had limited Himself ; and to take up other tasks, which were also dear to His Heart, but which lay not within His immediate duty.

On three occasions at least, He was asked to turn aside ; to the sphere of political, to the sphere of ethical, to the sphere of economical reform ; and each time He refused to be so diverted.

(1) When men of the chosen race wished Him to be their King, did His Heart not beat in sympathy with that ambition ? The political state of the country was as unsatisfactory in His eyes as it well could be. Judah was governed by an alien usurper and unbeliever. He was Himself the rightful King. All His hope, all His work, was that He should be King. He came for nothing else than to set up His Kingdom. Yet He will not turn aside to political contest. Never was Jesus more majestically regal than when, with unquestionable supremacy and personal ascendancy, He refused the crown, and “sent away” exalted crowd and eager disciples, and turned aside to the hill-top,—“Himself alone.”*

(2) Again, little He cared, we think, for class distinction, and exclusive privilege. Was it not His Will that there should be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, Abraham’s seed nor slave, but all one in Christ Jesus ? Yet when a woman, with a plea that would melt a heart of stone,

* See St. John vi., 15 ; St. Mark vi., 45, 46.

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besought Him with tears, He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel."* 'Your houses'!†—But the old, rotten, worn-out aristocracy of the Jews might continue, for Him, nevertheless. It was not His part to level the unjust inequalities of fortune. When did He stir to put right the wrongs of a bad social disorder?

(3) Again, we are very sure that it is of deep concern to Him, Who is Lord of the earth and the fulness thereof, that the land should be enjoyed by all the children of His human family. It is not only the sunshine and the rain (barren portion of the poor!) that God designed for the common enjoyment. But there are men, so it seems, who would steal the daylight if they could, or rent the privilege of gazing on the stars, or sell, in steel cylinders, the oxygen by which we live. But did Jesus take sides against the oppressors, and demand a community of wealth? One came to Him, smarting under scornful and high-handed injustice; "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." And He said, "Man! who made Me a judge or a divider over you?"‡ He would not turn aside. It was not His business to do that which nevertheless was right to be done.

Yes! and we must admit with some surprise that Jesus freed no slave, enfranchised no woman, checked no war, crushed no oppression, reduced no

* St. Matt. xv., 24.

† Cp. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III., Sc. i., 94.

‡ St. Luke xii., 13, 14.

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capitalist, condemned no tricks of trade. He called Herod a fox, but He did not dethrone him ; He told the Pharisees they were vipers, but bade the people obey them. He lived His Divine Life, and died His Divine Death, content to establish and deliver the Truth and the Faith, which others should apply to the healing of the sorrows of the world.

Oh ! that I might learn, drawing near to the closer Presence of my Lord, a clearer knowledge of His Will for me, and of the service He seeks at my hands !

For to me, too, has come this temptation, as it comes to younger, and therefore better, men in the spring and vigour of first enthusiasm ; comes, like a bright vision from God, of better manners, cleaner, purer, juster life, a nobler social state. What ! can that be a temptation ? Yes ! if it leads me to forsake, for what I think the seat of the war, that outpost, on the holding of which the victory really depends. It is a temptation for the sentinel, set to tarry with the stuff, to do the duty of a scout.

Three dangers I desire to guard against.

(i.) (Forgive me !) That the Gospel of Christ should be left out ; that Priests should be so engrossed, so enchanted, with the glamour of new social ideals that it comes to be not the first duty to inflict the Gospel message. I am not, even in thought, questioning the value and truth of the

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higher social ideals ; I am merely saying that our duty is the enforcing of something else. We are all terribly prone to the noble, but inaccurate, misconception of our own importance, which cries agonisedly, like the Prince of Denmark :—

“ The time is out of joint : O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right ! ”*

Be cheerful, sirs ! You were not born for so painful a destiny ! There are plenty of social reformers. Social reform is the popular study of this century. Our particular, specialised, contribution to the new republic is to insist, ‘ Whatever you do to mend the world, you must not leave out the Gospel of Christ.’ If we don’t insist, the world will forget. Twice is the situation admirably summarised for us by our Blessed Lord Himself. He seems to compare the stir and turmoil of society to the preparation of some grand dish meet for the master’s use ; and the Church stands by and persists, ‘ You must not forget the salt ; you must not leave out the leaven.’†

‘ But,’ men say, ‘ our social ideals are the Gospel ; there is no Christianity without them : this is the work Christ has called us to.’ Precisely ! That is what I mean by leaving out the Gospel of Christ.

(ii.) For that leads to the second danger and

* *Hamlet*, Act I., Sc. v. † See St. Matt. v., 13 ; xiii., 33.

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fear ; namely, that the Church may come to take sides in the settlement of a great problem, and so may be limited in the delivery of her message to those who take one side in the controversy. But though it may be right for the shepherd to leave the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness that he may seek the one that is lost, still he is shepherd, if not solely of the ninety-nine, so neither solely of the one, but of all the hundred. It seems to me an obvious truism that we must not so be led aside from that pastorate, as that any section of our people cannot accept our ministry. We do that if we ally ourselves with one side, and against the other side, in a great public question. The French Church of the Revolution had taken sides. The English Church has often taken sides ; and always to her sorrow and loss. We take sides when we allow something else to supplant the message which is for all men alike, equally.

(iii.) And then thirdly, in turn arising from this, I fear the slow loss and deterioration amongst us of the pastoral character ; lest we should so accustom ourselves to living always in the open, on the platform, so to speak, and be so busied with abuses and reforms, with strifes and debates, that we find it uncongenial to speak soul to soul of things that lie beneath the interests of men's bodies, and concern the life, the character, the soul.

I felt a pang of reproach the other day when a

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man in one of our big towns said, "I don't go to Church now, because I never hear anything I can't read of for myself in the newspapers any day." And indeed we may so adapt ourselves to the study of men's worldly environment, that we become insensible to their spiritual setting.

"Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand."

What, then, am I for? Where do I come in? What specially must I do to help in the travail pains of our dear dear England, and as the faithful, humble servant of her Apostolic Church?

Is it too poor for us, is it a disenchantment, a disillusion, a fall to the ground from a flight of imagining, if we define our sphere in the terms of St. Paul's ambition, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"?* Are we like the boy who hopes to take a higher position than his father? Is it indeed not enough for us to be asked, not indeed that we shall not know all that is to be known, not that we should shut away our hearts from sympathy with any single hope and effort for the betterment of anything in the world, not that we should refuse to recognise the moulding influence of time and change on old beliefs and old customs :—all light

* 1 Cor. ii., 2.

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comes from God (and we above all men should rejoice to see it all) : but to be asked to make this the business of our lives, that men shall be forced to include, and be guided by, the Gospel of Christ ?

It is idle to say this work is not needed, when we know that the leaders of thought do not profess to be Christians. And we know, too, that no scheme can succeed that is not founded on Christian faith. We do not deliver our message if we just give away theology as the handmaid of social science. We deliver it only as we render it possible for men to see that social science is the handmaid of theology. We must not sink our message in theirs ; we must claim the grateful homage of theirs to ours. Theology needs to be explained, not to be given away.

And won't they listen to us ? Of course they will, so soon as they see the service we can render ; that these Christians have a power of reconciling men, a power of achieving social peace and goodwill, a power of uniting class to class, not by taking one side, but by taking all. Of course they will, when they see that the Christian message gives men personal peace, peace of heart and conscience ; gives them moral stamina, and power of moral recovery and growth. Can they ignore such a power as that ? It is just what they want.

I long for the Church to be like the Throne,—above controversy and party strife. And so it would

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be, if we all were "determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified": if in every parish there could be seen just one spot out of all the world where strife is laid aside, where masters and men, capitalists and labourers (aye! if you will, publicans and sinners), could meet, for all their disagreements, drawn together by a common need and a common attraction, side by side in one family of God. That is the service we may and ought to render: at least never to cease trying to render.

When the poet's harp was jarred and thrown out of tune, by the snapping of a string (you remember Browning's verses?),* the little cicada from the thicket, with her heart on fire, lit upon the broken string and, whenever it was needed, sounded forth her one clear note, restoring the harmony again, and completing the perfect chord: the one note, Love! Love! Love! lost by the world in its sin and shame, needed so bitterly by those who lack it most, brought to earth again and committed to our unworthy hands: 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost.'

* *The Two Poets of Croisic.*

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION.

“Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead.”—ROMANS VI., 13. (R. V.)

10 April, 1898. Easter Day. St. Cuthbert's, Bensham.

THERE are many lines of thought that press into our minds at the glorious Easter time : many aspects under which the Resurrection of our Lord may be viewed.

(1) Of the commonest among thoughtful people is the value of it as evidence for the truth of our Christian faith. It is, of course, the crucial point. If the Resurrection is a fact, then all the deductions that the Church has drawn from it, all the great and saving doctrines of the faith, all the essentials of the Christian position, follow as a matter of course. St. Paul realised this, that all turns on the truth of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead : “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”*

This is the most miraculous of all miracles. Many a sick man has been wonderfully healed ; but no one in the world has ever asserted, or even suggested, that ever anyone except our Lord has lived

* 1 Cor. xv., 14.

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again in the world after death, and not again died. It is said there is nothing new under the sun. And it is probably true that some one has been found to attach faith to every conceivable perversity and absurdity of thought. There is no limit to men's capacity for deceiving themselves. But this is news unique, unparalleled. No one has ever ventured to say this ; not one of all the fools, or philosophers, or creed-mongers, or fanatics ;—not one ; but only the Apostles of the Christian faith, who declare that Christ rose from the dead, and that they spoke to Him, and handled Him, and that he did not again die.

And this absolutely unique miracle is also the one fact of the ancient world which admits of almost mathematical and logical proof. Plenty of things we believe in the old times : but then nothing much depends on them ; they do not involve any great consequences for ourselves, and we have no great motive either to believe them or to disbelieve them. Everything depends on this : it must make all the difference if it is true. For then it calls us to a totally different kind of life. And, in accordance with its importance, so is its evidence. Admittedly, the kind of evidence on which we accept minor matters as true would not justify us in accepting a thing of such extreme and vital importance. But, judged by all canons of evidence, the witness to the Resurrection is conclusive, over-

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whelming. The intellectual difficulties involved in its rejection are far greater than in its acceptance. If we required such a wealth of proof for any other fact of our lives before we committed ourselves to any action, we should never do anything at all. Every day we have to act upon, and take for granted, far less supported probabilities. The Resurrection can only be refused upon the previous determination that it could not have happened.

This, then, is one fascinating line of thought at Easter time. In an age when people want to be convinced, an age at once sceptical, and thirsting for spiritual truth, we like to feel sure that our faith is well-grounded in reason.

(2) And then there is another aspect of Easter which more and more appeals to us as we grow older. The Easter message of Christ risen brings us a peculiar re-assurance as to our own dead. I don't mean to say that the hope of immortality depends on it. On the contrary, all good men believe in the life after death, whether they call themselves Christians or not. I do not ask anyone to believe it because it is probable, but because it is right. It would be wrong to let go the hope of immortality : men would be worse ; the cause of humanity would droop and decline. The faith in it is an essential to human progress : we should rise up and move onward no more, if we surrendered it. And, I say, good men feel this. They know that

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they could not be good if there came a sudden termination to their consciousness ; and life, in the teeth of its promises, turned out a deception and a lie. Neither could we cease to believe in a hereafter, even if we were such wretches as to want to.

We are not wholly responsible for our instinct of the future life ; it is born in us ; we have inherited it ; our fathers have so yearned after it, so moulded themselves to it, that our very souls are part of it ; and it could not be got out of our nature without turning that nature upside down, and tearing it to tatters. Even if a man says he doesn't believe it, I don't believe him ; I am sure he does. That he doesn't want to believe it, I might sorrowfully admit : but that, in spite of himself, he doesn't, in the depths of his being, know that he is immortal, I discredit utterly. A woolly-headed negro might as well assure me gravely that he really doesn't think he has black blood in his veins !

But apart from the general belief in immortality, which is a necessary faith in every hopeful and progressive society, the Resurrection of Christ brings us special re-assurance as to our own dead. Year by year the roll of them increases ; and the world is made up of those who find themselves constantly becoming more and more stranded, alone, in life ; their own circle of contemporaries growing smaller and smaller ; familiar forms and faces and voices meeting them no more. We watch

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them passing away. At first we regard it as natural and proper. Do they not make room for us to take their vacant places? Much of the success of our plans depends upon our seniors clearing out. But very soon we find, first that we are becoming more and more alone in the world, and then that it is going to be our own turn ; that the eager world is treading close upon our heels, to crowd us out too, and our own time is dwindling and shortening every day. Who cannot think since this time a year ago of some by whom his circle is narrower and poorer?

And to these thoughts Easter comes in with a message of re-assurance such as no formal theory of immortality can give. We gather round, we look upon, our Easter altar then, and every single lily speaks to us of some dear one gone and remembered, and associated by us to-day with the risen Lord, Who has overcome death. Christ crucified and risen gives a warmth, a colour, a definiteness to our hope that we cannot surrender. It is all the difference between our Christian faith in God and bare Theism. God revealed by the cross, God taking our nature and bearing our sin, is a different God to one who did nothing of the sort. To Him we can trust ourselves in life and in death ; to Him we can confide our dead, and grieve not, but rejoice. They are safe ; we shall see them. The time will come, then, if not before, when the weight of attraction on that side the grave shall over-

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balance and exceed the restraining, deterring gravitation here ; when our greatest hope and love is there ; and we, too, shall gladly and serenely go. God takes the magnet of our souls from behind us and beneath us, and He puts it in front of us and above us and on the other side of the grave.

This we owe to the Easter gospel. Neither of these two trains of thought can be absent from our minds to-day. The Resurrection of Jesus establishes our reason in the Christian faith : it is the most certainly verifiable of all historical facts. It also gives consolation to our hearts ; it makes the present love and the future hope clear and sure.

(3) But now the text gives us a further motive and appeal by means of it, relating not to the past, not to the future, but to the present, the Now, the little platform of solid foothold on which we stand, to which we cling, between the banks of mist and shadow all around. “ Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead.”

The word in the Authorised Version, “ Yield yourselves unto God,” does not quite give the idea of formal self-presentation before God, which is in the Greek. The Israelite appeared before the Lord at certain times, at the great Fasts and Festivals of the Jewish Church, to take his share and part in the Divine worship. We are to do likewise : to challenge His inspection, to claim His correction, to realise His piercing insight into our inmost souls. And

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what shall we show Him? What marks of our own loyalty and attachment and appropriation to Him? How shall He discern if we are what we profess to be, His children, His blood-bought possession, precious and lovely in His sight? Have we good deeds to show, records of faithful service, marks and scars of hotly-contested fights for Him? Ah! how few! How hard even for Him to discern any such in us! No! it is not what we have done that commends us; the test is somewhat different: "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead." The presence or the absence of His Resurrection Life in us—that is the token for which He looks, and by which He recognises His own. Do we appear before Him as "alive from the dead?"

Nothing is more remarkable in Scripture than the way it is taken for granted that, because Christ is risen therefore we, His members, are risen with Him into a new life. "We are buried with Him," says St. Paul, "by baptism into death."* "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live."† "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above."‡ "God, Who is rich in mercy, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."§ And here he says "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead."

* Rom. vi., 4.

† Gal. ii., 20.

‡ Col. iii., 1.

§ Eph. ii., 5, 6.

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It is as much as to say, Christ by dying has brought to the world a new life, a new power of living. By the tremendous labour of His Passion He has rolled away what separated us from, and made us incapable of, the life of God. Dead we were, utterly dead, to that higher life, knowing nothing of it, neither possessing it nor desiring it. But now it is available for us, and we are quickened by it, if only we choose to have it. For all depends upon ourselves. If we take it and live by it, it is ours ; if not, though it is ours for the taking, the mere picking up, yet is it never ours. Therefore St. Paul says, "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead." He does not mean 'Call yourselves what you are not,' but, 'Be what you ought to be, and may be, for the choosing. Act as alive, and you will find yourselves alive, unto God.'

It is just as when Jesus bade the man stretch out the withered arm : the power, the reality, came with the obedient effort. Or, when the disciples, with ridiculously inadequate resources, assayed to feed the great multitude, and in the effort the supply proved equal to the demand they made. So here, so much is the Resurrection Life of Christ ours, that when we act in reliance upon it we find it is ours : we undertake to do what the possession of

* Rom. vi., 11.

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it demands, and we find we can do it. Draw upon the life, rely upon it, pledge yourself for it, and, lo ! it does not fail you, it is there.

So our text means, 'Present yourselves unto God, so that He may see in you that you have learned to use His strength, that He may see that you are instructed to lean on His strength and not only on your own, and to achieve your duty by help not your own.' That is Life : the seed of an infinite extension and expansion of life.

In every life there come opportunities of proving the reality and sincerity of brave words. Every trial is such an opportunity. Every demand for sacrifice is a call and a promise of strength made perfect in weakness. But only such life in us can God love. He cannot love dead things, except as they may be quickened into life. Where there is no going forth from self, no sacrifice, no dependence on Him (because self is insufficient), there His life is not.

And so we may say that all men stand in one of two classes : either the Resurrection Life of Jesus is in some degree stirring in them, or it is not ; either the wish of Jesus for good is controlling them and supporting them, or they are self-contained and quite apart from the range of His influence. Of course, even in that case, His power is acting upon them ; but they can only be said to be alive in the Apostle's sense, if they respond to it,

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if they reciprocate, and recognise, and consciously adapt themselves to, His touch.

Again, many may be truly quickened by His Resurrection Life, even though they do not know our Lord by name ; who are Christians in fact, though not in profession ; who obey an inner law and leading of right and love, and do not know that this law is the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, in one way or another, what He does require is the presence of His upward-striving, better-growing Risen Life ; the Life of a soul that won't be dead ; that at least will do something to kick itself alive and free.

The husbandman refused to destroy the fruit tree. Why ? Because of the fruit it bore ? It bore no fruit ; had nothing to show. Never mind. But he hoped still there was life somewhere ; and life might spread and make the whole tree healthy and strong, and then the fruit would be sure to come. Only if there was no life, and no promise of it, would he consent to cut it down.*

So do you see how the ground and justification of Christian belief stands ? It isn't a question of external proof ; not an academic literary discussion ; not a long, spiritual, Darwinian controversy. It is a question of Life : of a power through Christ to rise up from sloth and death to triumph through Him over all sin, to become a spring of Life in the

* See St. Luke xiii., 8, 9.

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world, a Life of new relations, of wider personality ; a Life not any more of bare self, but of self infused, intermingled, with the Spirit of God and man.

Does His Resurrection issue in our Resurrection, here and now? Is it beginning to do so? Is there a sign of it, be it only a March wind or an April shower? Does the 'brushwood sheaf'* of our nature, under the influence of spring, burst into 'the tiniest leaf?' Do the thrushes and the black-birds of our internal gardens begin to try preludes of coming song?

Because, O friends, that may and must be for all of us:—Easter in our hearts, Easter in our lives ; the dead winter vanishing ; dried leaves swept away ; the massed snow loosening, slipping, thawing, warmed through by the Sun of our Souls : alive from the dead by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ ; going forth in His strength and love, to be brave, pure, hopeful, grateful, restful, contented, sons of God !

* Cp. Browning, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*.

"The lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf."

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"A good soldier."—2 TIMOTHY II., 3.

17 April, 1898. Low Sunday. (Church Parade.)
St. Cuthbert's, Bensham.

OUR meeting here for service this morning is noteworthy and suggestive. It is an assertion on your part, that whilst you bear arms, at the same time you admit the Captaincy of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is an acknowledgment, on our part, that your profession of warfare is not inconsistent with, or a disqualification for, membership in the Church of Christ, the Prince of Peace. That is a point (I am here to say this morning) that wants looking at. As is so often the case, one's first impression turns out to be not correct, and further examination modifies one's earliest conclusion.

At first, nothing would seem to be clearer than that war is opposed to Christianity, and that a Christian cannot possibly be a soldier. And so there follows the mental position I am most anxious to correct and remove from the thoughts of all who hold it: on the part of the soldier, that war is, of course, wrong, but nevertheless necessary sometimes, and that he must fight, although he is denying

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Christ thereby ; on the part of the Christian believer, who is a man of peace, that he is bound to disapprove of the soldier, while, nevertheless, he permits him to risk his life for his advantage, and, so to speak, pull the chestnuts out of the fire for his sake, while he himself sits in his pew in Church. He does not approve of war, but he profits by it.

Now I utterly deny that anything that is wrong can be necessary or expedient. If a thing is not right, then it can do no good, it can be of no use, it can be nothing but a sheer mischief, and hindrance, and drawback, to do it. There is no such thing as expediency apart from righteousness. The merely expedient turns out always in the long run to be most inexpedient. It is like a man spending a good midsummer day in taking a short cut. No ! Unless war and the profession of the soldier is a right, good, Christian calling, it ought not to exist. I want you to see that you bear arms, not on sufferance, not as needing to apologise to humanity, not in disgrace, so to say, but as righteous, loyal, faithful ministers of right, the members of an honourable, aye ! and a Christian calling. The only true soldier is a Christian soldier.

And first let me enquire what light the Bible sheds upon the question of war. The answer must of course mainly come from the New Testament, as the final and fully-developed exponent of the morality of Jesus Christ. Still, we hold there can

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be no contradiction between Old and New ; and the study of the Old Testament is needed as well, to give us a complete view of the teaching of Scripture.

I will only remind you that in the Old Testament the God of Israel is commonly spoken of as Lord of Hosts, or armies, and as Captain of the Host of the Lord : that Israel has a mission of the sword to destroy the foul and immeasurably corrupt Canaanite tribes, sunk past recovery in unspeakable abominations ; to say, ‘this filthiness shall come to an end ;’ and that the whole rise of Israel, from the slavery of Egypt to the independence of Palestine, is effected by patriotic, and venturesome, and resolute, warfare. The glory of the nation, its very existence as a people, was won by the heroism of the Judges, of David, of the Maccabees, against formidable odds. Cut out the militarism of the Old Testament and I scarcely know what you have left ; for the poetry and the prophecy is based upon the spirit acquired in conflict. They fought for no personal aim it is true, but they fought : they were a race of soldiers.

But as I said, it is the New Testament that will rule our ideas upon the question. Now this is the strange and rather unexpected result of a study of the New Testament with reference to the matter. What we find is this : that Christ, and the Apostles of Christ, living under the burden of a great military despotism, do not forbid war. They are not sparing

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in denunciation of heathen vices and worldly failings ; they do not shrink from pointing the contrast between Christian and heathen morality, and urging the self-denying claims of Messiah's Kingdom ; but they do not forbid war.

Our Blessed Lord distinctly warns us that great and terrible wars will be, as a token of His own Advent ; but He does not add, as a requirement of discipleship to Him, that His followers are not to join in them. He is full of pleas for the forgiveness of personal injuries ; He asks for the spirit which, when you are smitten on one cheek, turns the other ;* but he manifestly omits to apply to nations the rule of the Christian policy in personal life. He says, " Let him that hath no sword, sell his garment, and buy one."† We do not in the least misunderstand this. We know Him for the Prince of Peace. We know that His tender love towards mankind must cause Him to hate and loathe war and all violence. We cling to His hope and design to bring peace to the world, at a time in the far-off future, when men " shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, neither shall they learn war any more."‡ But nevertheless the impression we get is clear that war is one of the moulding influences by which the world is prepared for Christ's coming. He does not forbid war.

* St. Matt. v., 39. † St. Luke xxii., 36. ‡ Is. ii., 4 ; Mic. iv., 3.

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It will surely be of interest to you to be reminded how uniformly in the New Testament the soldier is spoken of with respect and frank recognition of noble qualities. I do not recollect any adverse portraiture of a soldier in the New Testament, though there may be such.

Soldiers are among the eager and attentive hearers of John the Baptist by the river Jordan.* One centurion by his faith, called forth the boundless admiration of our Lord : “ I have not found so great faith ; no, not in Israel.”† Another, stationed at the Cross, was freely won to the confession, “ Truly this was the Son of God.”‡ Cornelius, the officer of the Italian band, was among the earliest and truest of Christian disciples.§ Julius, in charge of St. Paul, during his voyage to Rome, treated him courteously, and saved his life.† Many of the Prætorian Guard, in the Emperor’s Palace, in heathen Rome itself, acknowledged Christ at the preaching of St. Paul.|| The Philippian gaoler was a soldier.**

St. Paul’s Epistles, his most stirring appeals for manly and courageous Christian graces, are borrowed directly from the sights and sounds of the camp and the barracks. His allusions to the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, the

* St. Luke iii., 14.

† St. Matt. viii., 10.

‡ St. Matt. xxvii., 54.

§ Acts x., 1, 47.

† Acts xxvii., 3, 43.

|| Acts xxviii., 16 ; Phil. i. 13, iv. 22.

** Acts xvi., 27, 30.

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helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, the firm front rank,*—all shew the keen interest he took in the details of the soldier's life. The very Benediction of the Church of Christ down all the ages, taken from his writings, is a military form. "The peace of God keep your hearts," we say from our Altars; and the Greek word for 'keep' means 'stand sentry over' your hearts.† 'The peace of God stand guard over you.'

So it comes about that the army of a Christian nation, even the warfare of a Christian nation, cannot be excluded from Christian activity. The Christian is called to be a soldier too; the soldier is called to be a Christian too. War, however deplorable, however disastrous, may be undertaken even by servants of Jesus Christ. He does not forbid war.

And the reason of this, I hope, will become plain on a little thought. It is not that the results of war are not very, very terrible and shocking; but it is that there are worse things still. Yes! I know about the carnage, the suffering, the bereavement, the violation of happy homes, the destruction of property, the letting loose of lower passions, the subversion of all human affairs. Yes! I know! But there are worse things still; things from which even such horrors are a relief and a deliverance.

* Eph. vi., 13—17.

† Phil. iv., 7.

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I am not, of course, talking of wrongful war, but of rightful war, resorted to as a last resort.

War, as undertaken by a Christian nation, is an instrument of right and not of wrong. It is not self-seeking; it is self-denying. It is not to enslave, but to liberate. It is not to overturn order, but to establish order. It is not the antithesis of peace, it is the promoter of peace; the condition of peace.

War is not itself a primary cause, but a secondary cause. It is itself a product of something before it. It is a great evil, but it is the due and necessary outcome of worse evils; it tends to mend and adjust the worst evils, not to aggravate and increase them. It is like the surgeon's letting of blood, not for death, but for life. Or like the pestilence as the penalty of bad sanitation. Both the war and the pestilence are preventible evils so soon as ever we men choose to avoid the sins that lead to them. God cannot be blamed for the evil and painful consequences of sin; He righteously inflicts them, and will, till men stop sinning.

For a Christian nation to engage in war is not to do evil that good may come, which would be wrong; it is to embrace a terrible alternative to worse wrong. I suppose it is true that there is more sin in one day and night, in any great city, in the piping times of peace, than on the bloodiest of battle fields. Men soon fall into habits of softness and indulgence, and come to think pain and death

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the worst of ills. It is not so. Sin is worse than pain, though it doesn't look worse.

It is not really the most terrible thing, the thing to be most avoided, to die. There are more terrible things: to sin, and be wicked, and lose God, is infinitely worse. It is worse to be dishonoured, to relinguish high and noble ambitions, to fail of your plighted word, to forsake the cause of the weak that look to you for help. It is worse to let misrule, and oppression, and slavery, triumph.

Christianity is not an acquiescence, a sufferance, a submission; it is a righteous force, compelling right. I don't mean forcing anyone's opinions, but restraining and coercing their evil deeds. The sword of the Spirit is no plaything; it is bright and keen; it bites deep; it smites hard; it is a power for good.

Who can say in the main that England's armed strength has not been a security for peace, and a guarantee of order and good government? The name and military power of Great Britain has, we may proudly say, contributed, as could not have been the case had we been weaker, to the spread of light, and order, and religion, and civilisation.

People who believe in good government, often forget that it depends on this power. We loiter in the streets, and a policeman tells us to 'move on.' Well! we 'move on.' We must; we are absolutely compelled. We do not dream of contesting

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the point. Why? Why this obedience to a man in blue? Because behind him is an absolutely irresistible force. In the tip of his truncheon he carries all the weight of Great Britain's army, and navy, and volunteer forces. You cannot overcome him till you have overcome them all. And that is a guarantee of order. The order of our streets day and night, the safety of home, and wife, and child, depends on the readiness and the ability to make war. Ultimately it comes to this; if war is necessarily wrong, and an army is unchristian, then police and courts of justice must also be unchristian, because you cannot have the one without the other.

Only, let the high calling make the spirit high. Who says that the days of chivalry are past? Let them not be! Let soldiers of ours to-day be generous, and forbearing, and tolerant, and self-restrained. Let them be the soul of honour, and the pink of courtesy, and the essence of gallantry. Tennyson bids us "let the ape and tiger die."* Well; may our soldiery, all the world over, let the brigand, and swaggerer, and libertine, die, and stand instead warriors and defenders of a great nation, protectors of its homes, exponents of its Christian faith and manhood.

There is not one of the brave deeds of history I love to think of, more than what is going forward even now in India,—the work of the army in deal-

* *In Memoriam* cxviii.

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ing with the plague : the patience, the forbearance, the tenderness under most trying misrepresentation and misconception. And that seems to me a sort of type and symbol of the work of our stronger, truer, Christian people on behalf of the backward peoples of the world ; to minister to their poverty and weakness ; to raise them, with loving violence, to health and humanity again.

In the great work given by God to the English-speaking race, you, my brothers, have a share. As things are in Europe and throughout the world now, he would be a bold man to predict whither his steps shall wander, where his life's work shall be cast, how his own fate shall meet him. The outlook is sufficiently uncertain to be highly interesting. But at least we may all resolve to be strenuous, and brave, and manly, and (the secret of all, and the security of all) good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

GRUDGING SACRIFICE.

“What meaneth . . . this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”—I SAMUEL XV., 14.

5 October, 1898. Harvest Festival. St. Hilda's, South Shields.

THAT was a question the King found it very awkward to answer.

A very few words will suffice to recall to your minds the occasion of this embarrassing demand. One of the very first commissions given to King Saul by the Lord was the bidding to lead his hosts against the Amalekites and destroy them utterly: the whole race of them, and all their belongings! There was to be a clean clearance of them from off the face of the earth.

Shallow readers, with singular lack of historic perspective, have demurred to the Divine justice in giving such a command, on the score of cruelty. They have alleged a false plea of pity. They have talked much of weak women slain, and innocent children put to the sword. But we must remember that Saul and Samuel would of course interpret the will of God by the light they had, and not by the light we have. We should know that nothing

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cruel could be the will of God (though God still executes severe just judgments) ; they could only see one way to obey Him.

But even further, nothing could be more certain than that, if the chosen people, the one champion in the world of God's righteousness, was to prevail against the overwhelming and perfectly incorrigible corruption of the Canaanite tribes, it was, and must be, by relentless opposition and unwavering antagonism. Any truce, any holding of the hand, anything short of mortal combat, meant their infection and moral captivity by the fatally seductive heathenism ; and there was what seemed to them then, what seems to us now, the last hope gone of the cause of righteousness getting foothold in the world of sin. For all their faith and their covenant there was too much of attraction to the lower nature of all of them in the shameless license of these nature-worshippers. Again and again, in the course of their history, was proved the ruin of mingling with the heathen and doing their works. To regard the whole evil seed as devoted to the Lord was plainly the only security for the chosen people.

God seems never to have reckoned any price too high, any sacrifice too costly, whether for Himself or, let us dare to say it, for His creatures, to give, that right may triumph.

So Saul went against the Amalekites ; and, as

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ever must be the case, the pure and the faithful were wholly more than a match for the guilty and sinful. The Amalekites were crushed.

Then came Saul's sin. He forbore to destroy them utterly as he had been told : but he and the people "spared Agag and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fatlings and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them ; but everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly."* But, of course, that was to spoil completely the grace and value of the service he had rendered.

When the service of God becomes profitable, and good business, it is no longer service of God, but service of self. This was just the feature distinguishing the covenant people from all others in the world, marking them with the clearest stamp of the Divine, that they were not to serve God for what they could get, but for right's sake and duty's ; for God's sake alone. The religion of Mahomet appealed to the deepest soul of the brigand ; but the faith of Israel was based on self-denial. Saul spared the best of the spoil and brought it into the camp of Israel. This is the occasion of our text.

Then, in the very hour of the King's fall, before there was time to put away the tell-tale witnesses to his disobedience, when all the sanctuary was stocked with farm produce, Samuel, the

* Verse 9.

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prophet of the Lord, came (you might be sure he would) to inspect and pass judgment upon all they had been doing! Of course he did. The word went out that Samuel was come. He got there just at the awkward time! And Saul stepped out to meet him, with all the alacrity and assurance of a bad conscience. This is the moment of our text.

He rather overdoes it. You detect uneasiness and apprehension in his loud and confident greeting of the prophet: "Blessed be thou of the Lord; I have performed the commandment of the Lord." He speaks eagerly, effusively, at the top of his voice; and you feel all the time that his mind is on the stretch behind him, and his ears itching backwards to hear if he is going to be betrayed by any tell-tale noises from the coops and pens hidden out of sight.

And indeed he is! It is no use trying to smother and stifle his guilt; it is thousand-tongued! And no sooner is Samuel come within the purlieus of the camp than the King, with rueful face, hears the momentarily suspended clamour break forth. It is for all the world like the River Tyne in a fog; or a manufacturing town at twelve o'clock. The things won't be quiet; they are conscious of being out of their proper place; and in every note and key of animal outcry they appeal to him with a perfect chorus and medley of rural sounds: the lowing of oxen, the murmur of fatlings, the bleating of ewes,

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the baaing of lambs, doubtless the crowing of cocks and the cackle of geese, protesting against the impropriety of putting them where they were. Poor Saul !

“Blessed be thou of the Lord,” said the King, with a note of diffidence in his voice, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.” And Samuel said, ‘Indeed ! What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear. What is this place to which I have come ? Is this the camp of Israel ? Is this the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts ? Is this the place where His honour dwells ? Or is it not, rather, and instead, some Amalekite farm-yard ?’

The King’s contention is, that this is all a sacrifice, an offering, a great service in honour of the Lord. The point urged by the prophet is : It is simply a piece of self-will : the gift of your rebellion, not of your obedience ; you have not broken with Amalekite pollution ; you want to be worldly and religious too.

There are two minor details in the Scripture story which are, yet, not without their value in guiding our minds to the purpose of the narrative.

(1) All this took place at Gilgal, the spot where, when Joshua had first brought Israel into the Promised Land, the covenant was solemnly renewed, and the reproach of unfaithfulness was

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‘rolled away’ (that is the meaning of the word) from the people.* Now, ever after this sin of Saul’s, Gilgal lost its credit as a sacred place in the estimation of the Scripture writers, and became the synonym for a place infamous for a bad sacrifice. Look out the name in a concordance, and see how, all through the Prophets, it is mentioned with this shade of meaning. Saul said “the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God ; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”† The miserable excuse did not, of course, deceive Samuel for an instant ; but it did serve to illustrate henceforth a bad, faulty sacrifice.

(2) And again, may I not draw the same inference from the very expression Samuel used ? At the Passover Feast it was the part of the youngest present, each time, to put the question to the head of the house, “What mean ye by this service ?” And then the father would solemnly recite the old story of redemption and deliverance from Egypt.‡ And here Samuel, as if conscious of the very unworthy subterfuge in Saul’s mind, asks, “What meaneth this bleating in mine ears ?” What mean ye by this service, O rebellious King ? “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord ? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than

* Josh. v., 9. † Verse 15. ‡ Exod. xii., 26, 27.

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the fat of rams." '* At any rate, you have here a perfectly unmistakable example of the false sacrifice, the parody, the caricature, the distortion of the true, which is, and ever will be, the negation of all that is really meant by sacrifice.

Here, then, are two ideas,—the perfect contrast and contradiction of one another. The one, the baneful, superstitious, soul-destroying, perversion of heathenism, which is simply humanity without the revealed Will of God; that is found everywhere, in all ages. There are plenty of heathens in Church to-night. The other, the Divine truth, absolutely unique, found in the Bible alone; the fair and beautiful Light, of which the first is the dark and distorted shadow.

The first is the lie that men may wheedle, and coax, and bribe, the Most High by their gifts, and their self-mutilations, to let them have their own way; to let them alone, without Divine interference. It is sacrifice, whose object is to conform the Divine Will to the human will. It is essentially the assertion of selfishness.

The second is the truth that, God being our Father, All-Wise, Almighty, All-Loving, we need never seek to change His Wisdom for our ignorance, but to bend our wayward hearts to receive and honour His Will. Not, 'Let me have my way, and here is a fatling for You, if You only will;' but,

* Verse 22.

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‘Lo ! I sacrifice to Thee in token that I am Thine. I lay myself, like this victim slain on the altar, before Thee, to do with me as Thou wilt ; to ask only that Thy Will be done.’ That is the true meaning of every sacrifice, from the one offering on the Cross, to every single pleading of it in the Church to-day.

There are the two kinds of service to God : the sacrifice which is only a dishonour and an insult, and the sacrifice which is a living sacrifice wholly acceptable to God,—our reasonable service.* Saul’s was selfish all over. It was one for God, and two for himself. He did not really care for the glory of God, but for his own gratification. He wanted to keep on terms with God, and still to do as he liked ; to satisfy God and to satisfy himself too. It was pure paganism. His very gifts to God denounced him with shrill outcry, as if they knew what frauds they were.

“ What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

I am sure you take my meaning ? Here come I to-day, a strange prophet, to your camp. I notice that a good deal that is unusual has been brought into the camp. I put this question, like my great prototype in days of old, ‘ My brothers ! what meaneth this bleating ?’ The voices of the farm-yard speak to me from every side. The very walls

* See Rom. xii., 1.

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and pillars are eloquent. The grain, the fruit, the flowers, cry out : “ The people spared the best to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God.” They are a sacrifice. Yes ! I know ! But which sort of sacrifice ? What does it mean ? “ What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear ? ”

I am not venturing to put that question (there is no need) to those whose loving hands and brains have toiled and plotted for the honour of God in decking His House with the first fruits of His bounty. Far be it from me to insinuate one afterthought of self-doubt in those who have given—as they love always to give—their best to this great cause. Nor am I speaking to any who come here (with hearts full of gratitude), to the Altar of God, as it is their delight to come. But I am asking the question of those who have come now, and never come at any other time, and who never go near the Altar ; those who have come selfishly, out of curiosity, to see a sight, to enjoy a sensation. Yes ! I ask them, what they mean by it ? ‘ What mean ye by this bleating ? ’

People like Harvest Thanksgivings, because they are so crowded, so warm and hearty, so uplifting. They go to one after another of them ; to all they can get to ; and they compare notes, and cackle about which is the best. One of my colleagues, going into Church last year at the Harvest

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Festival, heard one lady say to another, 'How many have you been to? this is my sixth.' And where does thanksgiving to God come in? Where is one humble thought of His great goodness to my sad sinfulness, and my solemn duty to render Him thanks and praise? I am always oppressed with the thought at Services like this.

People like a crowded Service : then why don't you crowd every Service? Why don't you do your part by your presence, not just to-night, but every Sunday, to add to the warmth and fervour of public worship? I do want to appeal to-night, first and chiefly, to those whom I will venture to call the Harvest-trippers : the people who just come to Church, when, as they say, there is 'something special.' Believe me, they are exactly on all squares with King Saul. Let there be no mistake about it. I tell them very plainly indeed : they are offering a thoroughly bad sacrifice ; they have not obeyed the command utterly to destroy Amalek ; but, as with Saul, on the heels of their worldliness, there comes this grudging and niggardly recognition, about once a year, of the claims they persistently disregard. I only wish their pennies would cry out in protest like Saul's sheep !

I hope those to whom my words apply will take them in good part. Why offer a bad sacrifice any more? Why not begin from now, and take up your dropped duty to God with earnest purpose?

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‘Hew Agag in pieces.’* Have done with this bleating! Begin to serve God. Bring to Him the acceptable gift of a heart purified and consecrated; the best sacrifice of a will surrendered and obedient to His will.

Never, surely, did we owe a deeper debt of gratitude and thanksgiving to God. We thank Him for His eternal and abiding blessings,—His funded blessings, so to speak: for the goodness of Jesus Christ; for sin pardoned and grace given; for the great sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. We thank Him now, besides, for His many special blessings: for a glorious harvest for one thing; for peace and prosperity at home for another; and then for His great mercies to England out in the world. What a wonderful year it has been! How, amid the snarl and threatenings of nations, England has wonderfully prospered in her great cause of right and freedom, steered with safety and honour through the greatest dangers! Should we not all offer a good sacrifice, and not a bad one, for such graciousness as this?

We should; we will! We are all resolved to render a service to God,—faithful, sincere, persistent, humble,—which He can accept and bless.

Shall I tell you, last of all, how we may test our resolve to give some sort of worthy thank-offering to the Lord? You can test it in three

* Verse 33.

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minutes. You are asked to give in support of the Day Schools of the parish. I cannot imagine that anything is more pleasing to our Blessed Lord than to see His people supporting, freely and ungrudgingly, the vitally important work of the Church Day Schools. Give to-night, then, a token of your affection, a pledge of your resolve, a measure of your gratitude according to your means: the witness of the 'better' sacrifice, the yielding of yourselves to God.

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"Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."—PSALM LXVIII., 18.

21 May, 1899. Whit Sunday. St. Cuthbert's, Bensham.

I PICK up the words we took to guide our thoughts last Sunday, and draw from them a further thought strictly suitable to our meditation to-day. Then, in the presence of the Ascension, we thought of our Lord ascending up on high, leading captivity captive, and, as proof of His Triumph, bringing gifts to men ; His special gifts to each one of us, to aid us in our special service.

And this glorious and generous endowment and help from the Risen and Ascended King, was more freely given than we could have possibly conceived or imagined. Like God's sunshine, which is poured forth radiantly on the just and the unjust, so the fruits and the promise of the Ascension are gained for all. "Thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also." Even the rebels against the Ascended King may change their mind and pick up the weapons He offers them, and enter instead upon the true warfare, the true service. "Gifts for the rebellious also."

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But there is more still; better things even yet! The verse concludes: "Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The Ascension results, not only in gifts from without, but in a companionship and indwelling of the Lord Himself, even for these same rebels, within. It is one thing to provide, in rich abundance of Kingly forethought, all the means and endowments of faithful service; it is another thing quite to make the sluggish and rebellious servants rise to the level of their privileges and opportunities, and do the service ready to their hands; but against which their foolish pride rebels.

That result can only be attained by a stirring and galvanising of the will within. And that, too, is here promised: "That the Lord God might dwell among them." Infinite condescension! The Lord of Glory sees us in our isolation and misery, apart from Him, and He gives this as the supreme outcome of the Ascension,—the indwelling, by God the Holy Spirit, in the rebel heart of man.

That is our theme on the Festival of Whit Sunday; not only the gifts, but the Presence of God among us.

There is a danger of our underrating the value of the Festivals, and so missing the blessing of them. People regard the observance of Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, as an ancient and pious custom which is, after all, only formal worship, and of

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no really spiritual value and practical importance. And perhaps the present Festival is especially fitted to shew how shortsighted and mistaken such a notion is.

For it is not only that the joining by the Church in the observance of Whit Sunday is a great means of proclaiming and asserting to the world the faith and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: but also it is an opportunity, of immense value, to obtain a definite extension and addition of the grace and power of the Holy Spirit for ourselves. We believe that, at the first Whitsuntide, God the Holy Ghost came in a new way, hitherto unheard of and unknown, with a definite outpouring of spiritual power upon the Church; and succeeding Whitsuntides are not merely commemorative of that first coming, but they are, or may be, in a real sense, repetitions and renewals of it.

The fruit and the issue of each well-kept Whitsuntide should be for us all more and fuller presence of the Holy Spirit within our hearts. For the truth is, if He has given Himself to hallow man's life, once for all, at the great first Pentecost, He is able to work in men's hearts, and to sanctify the Church now, just in the degree in which men and the Church will receive Him, and open their hearts to His indwelling, believing in the truth, and the reality, of His Being. Otherwise (save through

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the obedience of waiting souls He possesses), He can (humanly speaking) get no utterance in the world. He works in willing hearts.

It is, in its degree, the same as during the Incarnate Life of Jesus. Sometimes, it is written, He, even He, 'could do no mighty works, because of their unbelief.'* But where there was faith and the willingness to receive Him, He could work and save.

Well, then, so it is at Whitsuntide. To day all should be filled with the thought and the expectation of the Holy Spirit. The Festival directs all our minds to Him together ; leads us to be aware of Him, expectant, drawn towards Him in mind and affection. And that is surely a main condition for the new imparting of Himself.

At each Whitsuntide it must be possible for all of us again to be filled with the Holy Ghost. And what would surely be the effect upon the world, through the Church, if the Festivals were made by us according to His Will, truly and literally, ever fresh seasons of the dispensation of the grace of God ?

On a former Festival I traced out in Scripture the gradual advance and growth in the knowledge of the covenant people of God of the true conception of the Being and Person of the Holy Spirit. We saw how at first, while the inner power and

* Cp. St. Matt. xiii., 58 ; St. Mark vi., 6.

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working of His holy influence was always recognised, yet for long He was known only as an impersonal Influence, the mere effect and energy proceeding from God. God taught them, for example, how to design the Tabernacle by the Spirit;* or the Spirit came upon Samson;† and so on : as if it were a mere mechanical inspiration of an impersonal power, and not the ruling of a living Will and Spirit.

Even, at first, in the New Testament, this partial idea seems to hold. It was said to the Blessed Virgin, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."‡ And in the same way the Baptist tells of a ' Baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire.'§ And He seems to be still thought of more as an Influence than as a Person.

But as soon as was possible very different language was used of Him in Scripture, and the fuller truth clearly presented to the adoring faith of man. The Lord Jesus spoke in such terms as can only imply that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, Very God of Very God, in absolutely the same sense in which He Himself, the Eternal Word, is God. And henceforth in the Apostolic writings He is always spoken of in such a way as to make it certain that they had distinctly been told that He

* See Exod. xxxi., 2 ; xxxv., 31.

† See Judges xiii., 25 ; xiv., 19 ; xv., 14.

‡ St. Luke i., 35. § St. Matt. iii., 11.

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is God to be worshipped ; no mere Influence, but God the Holy Ghost.

“ It is expedient for you that I go away,” said the Lord, “ for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” “ He shall teach you all things.” “ He shall testify of Me.” “ He will guide you into all truth.” “ Ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” “ He will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* He is the Comforter, the Advocate, the Paraclete; as much a self-conscious Person as Jesus Himself ; carrying out and completing the mission of Jesus more widely, and completely, and universally than it had been possible for Jesus to do.

And so in His own Book of the Bible, the Acts of the Apostles, the death-deserving sin of Ananias and Sapphira was that they ‘ lied to the Holy Ghost.’† St. Paul addressed the Bishops at Miletum as those whom ‘ the Holy Ghost had made overseers.’‡ When St. Paul and St. Barnabas were starting on the first Missionary journey, “ The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”§ Writing to the Corinthians, St. Paul spoke of the many different gifts in the Church which the Holy Ghost divideth severally as He will.|| In the Epistle

* St. John xvi., 7 ; xiv., 26 ; xv., 26 ; xvi., 13 ; xiv., 17 ; xvi., 8.

† Acts v., 3 ; ‡ xx., 28 ; § xiii., 2. || 1 Cor. xii., 11.

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to the Romans we read, "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," and, "The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* All these are essentially personal acts.

And indeed the whole witness of the New Testament after Pentecost is constant in declaring the new and intense activity of the Divine Being, who then, in a wholly new way, came among men. Just as the Son of God came among us, being Incarnate, taking human flesh, so God the Holy Ghost, too, did separate Himself likewise from His Eternal Blessedness and enter into the life of man, and make the Church His Body or Home on earth. And He is now identified with us in our strife and struggle, as Christ was before the Resurrection.

This is the gospel period of the Holy Ghost, as that was the gospel period of Christ. The Apostle St. Paul speaks of the cry of suffering, weariness, and expectation which goes up, age after age, from the whole race of man in his travail time : "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;"† and then the Apostle attributes the same cry of weariness, and suffering, and hope to the Spirit Himself in His Eternal sympathy with us.‡ He is longing and designing to raise all men to an unachieved power and blessedness, but our sins, infirmities, errors, sorrows, are a heavy burden

* Rom. viii., 26 ; † viii., 22 ; ‡ viii., 23, 26.

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to Him. He can be resisted. He can be grieved. He shares all our conditions. "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

It cannot be too firmly remembered that all the doctrinal teaching of the Church as to the Person of God is not merely the conclusions of human thought, but the formal statement of the Truth given and declared to the Apostles by the Lord Himself. Even the highly technical and metaphysical language of the Athanasian Creed is simply the intense and elaborate effort to state, in answer to every kind of denial, the one central doctrine of Christ Himself.

It is at least clear that if we accept the revelation of Jesus and the statements of Scripture, we are committed to the belief in the Lord Jesus as the Eternal Word of God ; and equally to the belief in the Divine Personality of the Holy Ghost.

Then when we come to the effort to think out the relations in the Godhead so revealed, I believe that, with all the great minds of the Church, we do find (and that the more clearly, the deeper we go) that the Doctrine of the Trinity, far from being the incomprehensible and contradictory metaphysical puzzle which shallow thinkers imagine, is an absolute necessity of accurate philosophic thought. But in the end, even though the Faith of the Church proves to be essentially reasonable, it depends not

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on the support of reason, but on the Word of our Lord.

It is a subject somewhat unfamiliar to, and possibly uncongenial to, the practical and unspeculative tendency of the day ; but it may be well to remind you, as far as words can express it, of the way in which this Divine Personality is apprehended by the Christian Church.

The relation of the Son of God to the Father is expressed as being an Eternal Sonship ; not a creation, or a beginning to be, in point of time, but an eternal state, as eternal as God Himself, of subordination and Sonship. In the very Being of God, there is, as part of His essential Nature, a complexity of Personality, a mutual relationship. His Being is not merely that of an Individual, but of a Family. He is the Father : and Eternal Fatherhood implies Essential and Eternal Sonship.

Well then, further, the relation of the Holy Spirit is spoken of by our Lord, not as Eternal Sonship, but as Eternal Proceeding, or coming forth. " When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me."* And so once again we learn, that in God, as there is the relation of Eternal Sonship, so there is the Eternal Procession ; the Eternal going forth of the Holy Ghost : again, no created

* St. John xv., 26.

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Influence, beginning at a point of time to be exercised and put forth by God, but an eternal relation, part of the very Life of God, as eternal as God Himself,—the Procession of the Holy Ghost.

In the Creed we say, according to the Eastern version, ‘I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father;’ and in our own Western form of it: ‘Proceeding from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.’

All this somewhat difficult thought is the necessary human guarantee of the Divine revelation, that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal Influence, but the Lord God, to be loved and worshipped, to be intelligently sought, and prayed to,—close, intimate, all-knowing, all-loving, all-Holy. I think we ought to try, as far as we can, to recognise, and give Him the glory due to Him.

And Him, the Holy Spirit of God, this day declares, we all have very near to us.

There is not one thought or word told us of the Holy Spirit that is not inexpressibly dear, and winning, and touching. It is almost as if all the severe side of God, which cannot be wholly absent as we think of that Eternal Righteousness, were put aside when we think of the Holy Ghost. He is our Comforter, our Advocate, interceding for us,—us, the rebellious,—with unutterable desire for our

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peace and good. He presents to us the joyous thought of One Who finds His whole delight, not in Himself, but in the things of others. He has no aim of self; He is lost in others. He does not proclaim Himself, but the Lord Jesus. He retires and is unnoticed.

He has no form by which we can picture Him to our minds. He can only be known by the works of pure goodness, and graciousness, and love, which He produces. He saves us from the evils we most righteously deserve. He patiently waits for us; and leads us by gentle drawing and compulsion to choose and prefer, higher and better ways. He is the good influence of every life; its more than Guardian Angel. He does not suffer us to clasp Him; He eludes us and sends us on to Christ. He is known not in Himself, but by the joy He causes wherever He goes and is received, by the gush of new life He delights to bring, by His sunshine, and cheeriness, and cleansing power.

If you let Him save you, if you lean upon Him in trust which despairs of other help, you will be sure of Him, when He does not let you fall. If you seek Him within and around you, He will forgive you your evil, and give you peace of mind and heart, and open to you the Scriptures, and answer your prayers. Yes! you will be quite sure of Him. You will have the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

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“Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom.”—I KINGS x., 8.

4 August, 1902. 10th Sunday after Trinity. Westminster Abbey.

THE Old Testament lesson for to-day illustrates what seems to be a perennial faculty of the human mind : the faculty, I mean, to admire the wrong things. It is not a bit less in evidence to day than it was in King Solomon's time. But the study of this chapter yields us this compensation ; that the very misdirected enthusiasm of the writer of the First Book of Kings guides us unfailingly to the truth he missed.

‘The Queen of Sheba came to see the wisdom of Solomon.’* And what did she come to see? As you read, you see indeed that at bottom our author did know the right answer to that question, whilst he put it aside to admire the wrong things. “The Queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones : and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom [Ah ! what was it?] and the house that he had built,

* Cp. 1 Kings x., 4 ; and see St. Matt. xii., 42 ; St. Luke xi., 31.

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and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up into the House of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her. And she said: 'Behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.' "

But what was it that the Queen really admired? Let us do her justice. We must not wrong her by thinking she was so carried away by a vulgar admiration of a gaudy splendour and vast wealth,—the gold, and the jewels, and the food, and the clothes, and the staircase. I see no reason for thinking the Queen of Sheba was a snob. She herself was far more magnificent in mere tinsel and show than Solomon could have been. When you take the dimensions of the new Temple, and compare it with heathen shrines, you discover that many of the latter, doubtless familiar to the inquiring Queen, were far grander and more costly. She makes Solomon a present off-hand of a cool million and a quarter sterling;* she gives him the balsam plants, "which, for one thousand years," I read, "constituted the main export of Palestine, and were a source of wealth which moved the envy of Rome." She gave what she had, in gratitude and admiration for something quite different, which she had not, and longed to have.

* See Speaker's Commentary, on 1 Kings ix., 14.

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Then, as in worldly possessions she utterly surpassed Solomon ; so, as the despotic autocrat, whose people were her slaves, she had far more personal power than the King. It was not this that filled her with generous enthusiasm and longing. "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom."

This is, in the main, so evident, that, on another hand, all sorts of speculations have been indulged in of another kind. Silly people of all ages have supposed that Solomon's wisdom must have been some strange occult magic which he wielded. All over the East, and too often in the West too, just on the slender authority of this passage, it is believed that Solomon was the great magician who could build cities by word of mouth and unravel all the secrets of Nature. Josephus* says that incantations for the cure of disorders, and exorcising for casting out demons, which had been discovered by King Solomon, were used in Palestine in his time. All this because people have no other idea of wealth but earthly treasure, no other idea of wisdom but the marvellous and miraculous ; no true thought at all of moral grandeur, and the spiritual power of God.

The wisdom of Solomon was to be allied to God ; to know how to come to Him ; and to act

* *Antt.* VIII., ii., 5.

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through Him. And then, as the child's hand can wield the mighty steam-crane, so is the weak man able to do all things through God, Whose force he uses. In spite of our author, you can see that this is the true answer. Solomon had asked in the dream : " I am but a little child ; give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people." And God had answered, " I have given thee a wise and understanding heart."* And in the chapter before to-day's the Lord says : " I have heard thy prayer : I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put My Name there for ever ; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually. If thou wilt walk before Me in integrity of heart and in uprightness then I will establish the throne of thy Kingdom for ever."† And in our chapter, it was "when the Queen of Sheba heard the fame of Solomon concerning the Name of the Lord, that she came to prove him with questions ;"—too hard for her, but simple for him, who knew God. It was "his ascent by which he went up unto the House of the Lord" she so greatly envied, who knew not herself the way.

And now, what are you saying in your heart? Are you so disappointed? 'What, that!' you say; 'only that? Is that all? A thing so simple, so ordinary, so common-place, as the knowledge of God? Is that the wisdom which appeals so to my

* 1 Kings iii., 7, 9, 12 ; † ix., 3, 4, 5.

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imagination, and my sense of mysticism and antiquity? Why, what a disillusion ! ’

Oh ! but think ! To know God ! To know Him really, in this dark, sorrowful, anxious world ; to hold a real kinship and fellowship with the unseen Lord of Life, giving you a home of refuge, and the control of your own being, and the power of spiritual growth, in face of the paganism around you. Is it after all a little thing? Is it not everything?

That was what Solomon and his servants had. Here was the wisdom of Solomon enabling them really to unite. Yes ! this was the time,—too brief and fleeting,—the golden time, when, just for a little, the King and the people worshipped God together according to all the revealed teaching—the covenant, the sacrifice, the atonement for sin—at the one altar.

Why ! is it not wonderful and terrible? With this Book of God in our hands, telling us about God, revealing His Name, His Nature, His Will, His Love for us, and how we are to come to Him, so that we really do come to Him ; declaring this methodical revelation of four thousand years up to its full perfection in Christ’s Church :—is it not strange, is it not monstrous, that never, never have our fathers or we been able to serve Him as He requires? God cannot get Himself recognised and obeyed. For a few years men obey Him, and then they are

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strong and well : and then they fall away. Even now, of all the hundreds of fragments into which the Church is shattered, there is not one which serves God according to all His will.

But, perhaps, nearest of all in proportion to the degree of revelation was the Church of Israel under Solomon. His rule was whole-heartedly just and pure. The idea conceived by David for saving the world for God by a great military despotism had been decisively negatived ; and Solomon never attempted to number the people. He saw the service of Israel for man to be the building of the Temple of God. Israel was not the Conqueror, but the Priest, of Humanity, bringing the world a new and higher knowledge of God in the covenant worship. Israel should be sustained by all nations for this noble work : a sort of Melchizedek to the world. No one would envy or harm her. All nations should flow to her.

And the test of a rightly-founded Temple was perfect social Harmony. The wisdom of Solomon was so to inspire all men, so to manage all things, that all were contented and united ; so to take hold of every question in the right way, that no one was wronged and no one murmured. Being at peace with God, they were at peace with one another. Why ! It scarcely lies within the romance of our social dreams that we nowadays could attain to that adjustment of social problems involved in the simple

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words, "the people offered willingly"! This people did not need to be taxed. King and people were of one mind in service of God and man. "They offered willingly."*

Propound that solution to leaders and employers of labour to-day, and how would you be received? You would be received as the Lord was received when He would raise the dead : they would laugh you to scorn. What could be a better proof of the wisdom of Solomon?

Then the Queen of Sheba came, and saw, and questioned, and marvelled. What startles her into raptures of envy is the order of the kingdom : its unity, its brotherhood, its enthusiastic goodness, and peace, and love of God. Amazing spectacle ! Here is a people, mark you, a people positively happy ! The fear of the Lord is the open secret of its resistless success. The swift expansion of Israel is not as the tropical growth of other Eastern despotisms. Not a sword is drawn ; not a shot fired ; but all goes well. Nature herself blesses the Kingdom of Righteousness. Harvests do not fail, ships come safe to port, lawful projects succeed. There is no strife, no envy, no wreck. Even the women and the children are happy in this earthly paradise. "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom."

* 1 Chron. xxix., 9.

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That is something better than that Solomon should sit on his lofty throne, dropping pearls of wisdom all about the floor! Here is no selfish absolutism, with its cloth of gold outside, and its misery and dirt underneath! And in the Holy Land, in the Holy City, where this ineffable presence of God, this covenant Shekinah, was everywhere felt, an awe and a beauty crept over the Queen's heart, subduing and entrancing her inmost soul; and she felt that she had come near to the heart of things, and was gazing with rapt wonder on an eternal life;—the inner life of the Church of God!

Alas! it all passed away like a dream when men turned their hearts from God. The golden age of Solomon faded fast into a splendid memory. The very next King found Adoram, the tax-collector, to be necessary. And the people found it also necessary to kill Adoram.* No more willing offering then; but only futile recriminations about whips and scorpions!† Israel was split again into castes and camps, and ceased to be one even before God.

And you might have thought it was all a fable,—the wish the father to the thought, as usual,—but that, in due course, the time came again, and another King, another Prince of Peace, stood and said: “The Queen of the South came from the

* 1 Kings xii., 18. † xii., 11.

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uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!”*

And do we not see now the hope and the promise of that? It is the proffer of a golden age to us again. What we want so much is a Prince of Peace : great as Solomon was great, but greater and wiser than he : one able to unite us again, and elicit sweetness from our hearts again : one to dominate us by His gracious influence : one to manage us aright by drawing out the best of us : one to teach us the desire for the Temple of God : above all, one to open the inward sense of the eternal Presence. Oh ! how we should spurn our selfishness, and cast away our vice and dirt, and find our happiness in the happiness of all, if we had, indeed, such a King and Leader to draw all men unto Him !

And lo ! the greater than Solomon is here ! Not waiting to come with His golden age, but only waiting to be recognised, and turn our lead to gold : only waiting till the deliverance He ministers to His servants here and there as they seek Him one by one,—the deliverance (which is a fact of life) from sin, and death, and self,—isclaimed and possessed by all the people : so that once again it may be truly said of the nations, what could not be said now : “Happy are Thy men, happy are these Thy servants, which

* St. Matt. xii., 42.

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stand continually before Thee, and that hear Thy wisdom."

It is an easy transition from thoughts like these to the thought of the great scholar, the wise ruler, the saintly worker, whom you who worship here, no less than we in far-off Durham, mourn for and rejoice for with stirred hearts to-day. You can feel for us surely in the overwhelming loss of our dear and great Father in God, for you knew him and have lost him too. How Dr. Westcott loved this glorious place! I remember his telling me that he had always longed to be a Canon of Westminster, that he might spend the last days of his life here. And yet it is a great mistake to say that it was with reluctance or misgiving that he went forth from Westminster eleven years ago to the rougher work of his Northern Diocese. He rejoiced to go. He answered to the call with keenest zest and interest. In all his student days he had been forming his noble basis of life and faith; and when the time came he gleefully welcomed, with absolute conviction and boundless enthusiasm, that wider opportunity of guiding the industrial life of the North. Almost he needed Durham miners to prove his Cambridge faith!

It would be impossible for me—one of the sons of his house, at Auckland—to attempt to assess the value of any work of his; but I can at least tell a

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very little of what he has been to us. My brothers, he taught us to believe in God. He brought to us the Presence of God, in which he always moved. So habitually was his soul's gaze fixed on the eternal loveliness, so spontaneously was his heart lifted up in adoration, that we learned to believe too ; to know too ; to worship God in Jesus Christ too.

I want to say this : that his knowledge of God in Christ was the essential basis of all his social work. People are sometimes a little less than fair in claiming his great authority for various social remedies, and yet passing over the spring of all his hope, in the Lord Jesus Christ. To him all wisdom, all reform, was foolishness, if not inspired by the Prince of Peace, greater than Solomon ; because he was convinced that only in Christ can men truly unite or cooperate ; only through Christ can the poor be better housed, or drunkenness or vice be lured away ; only through Christ can children be redeemed, and home re-consecrated ; only through Christ can men's hearts be raised above the lust of gold, and softened to the service of men. Speaking to the miners in Durham Cathedral for the last time a fortnight ago, the watchword, the last counsel, he gave them was this : " The love of Christ strengthens." And this accounts for the infinite sweetness and gentleness ever veiling his tremendous moral intensity.

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Just at the very last he asked that the Psalms of the day might be read. And so his son read to him : “ The Lord Himself is thy keeper. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil : yea, it is even He that shall keep thy soul.”* As the words were read the Bishop gently pointed out to his son that they were from the morning and not the evening Psalms. And so he resumed instead : “ I look for the Lord ; my soul doth wait for Him ; in His word is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord, before the morning watch ; I say, before the morning watch” :† and then, “ Lord ! I am not high-minded ; I have no proud looks. I refrain my soul and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother : yea, my soul is even as a weaned child.”‡

“ Happy are Thy men, happy are these Thy servants, which stand continually before Thee, and that hear Thy wisdom.”

* Ps. cxxi., 5, 7 (27th morning). † Ps. cxxx., 5, 6.
‡ Ps. cxxxi., 1, 3.

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“ Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King.”—I ST. PETER II., 17.

10 August, 1902. 11th Sunday after Trinity.

St. Ignatius', Sunderland.

THIS passage is almost the classic reference of Scripture to such a great national event as fills our thoughts to-day. But it means, I am sure, far more than a matter-of-course approval and commendation of the powers that happen to be. It is no mere King-worship. Its carefully-balanced terms present a profoundly wise and comprehensive judgment upon a great political question.

But see, first, how the writer here is true to that great master principle of all the Apostolic teaching, learned (we cannot be mistaken) from the transforming influence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, by which the heart is always fixed upon the ideal, rather than the present and actual truth of things. The standard is not what is, but what is to be. The right way to reach the ultimate Hope is not to limit thought and action by present circumstances, but to present a view of life lit by the glory ‘that never was on sea or land’; untrue to present seeming, but true to Eternal Fact.

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Thus to St. Paul each one of the baptised was a Saint of God. He did not dissemble or shut his eyes to actual sin and degradation in them, but he refused to regard that immediate low earthly state as their true and proper state. Nay, this was the lie, the negation, the distortion of the truth, the truth of every one, that he, by his Baptism, was in Christ. Experience proved, and proves now, that St. Paul was right. To regard people as they are, is to leave them as they are ; to see them and to treat them, only as they should be and must be, the children of God, is to change them and to raise them to that.

And as with single souls, so with the family. How can you account for the same Apostle's teaching to families, when, in the lowest age of absolute decay and disregard of family life, an age of parental neglect, and marital infidelity, and child rebellion, he yet goes on speaking of fathers as true fathers, of wives as true wives, of children as dutiful children? They were none of these. The way to make them so was to go on seeing the image of God in the faded lineaments of human defacement. So children are to honour their wicked and treacherous parents, not just in proportion as these are truly deserving of honour, but as by Divine and natural law reverend and honourable.

Well ! just so in the matter of the text :
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God. Honour the King." How can all men be honoured in any age ; much less in that terrible day of social collapse, when the nobler, chivalrous, generous instincts were almost unknown, and all was indescribably sordid, and unlovely, and mean ? And yet the Christian way is to regard them as they ought to be. " Honour all men."

" Honour the King." And the King was Nero or Herod, both of them monsters of shameless, portentous, vice and cruelty ! Yet in spite of Nero, the King is to be honoured. The way to correct unkingly betrayal of the people is ever to hold aloft the true ideal of Kingship : to give Nero the credit which is not his till he learns to say, ' Surely I must be what is expected of me,—a true King.'

So sinners are treated as saved by the grace of Christ, that they may be saved by the grace of Christ. So Dr. Arnold, learning from the Apostolic standard, treated boys as gentlemen and as truthful ; and they became (what they were not before) gentle and true.

The way to make your Kings in the highest sense honourable is to " Honour the King." It has sometimes been a little difficult, no doubt. To speak to God, for instance, in the interest of ' our most religious and gracious King George IV.,' must on first thoughts seem a fantastic irony, if not a brazen untruth. But the principle holds, even under strain ; and the later reigns have shewn, and

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are shewing, that the true Christian course is to "Honour the King."

And yet, in the second place, we are not in Scripture tied down to the manifestly unpractical and unprofitable duty of a blind, unthinking, submission to any arbitrary will, or irresponsible Divine right of Kings. For the behest to honour the King does not stand alone. It is balanced and rounded and completed by conditioning and qualifying clauses ; and these combine to present a very noble social ideal. It is truly wonderful that any man in St. Peter's dreadful day should have been able to see so far ahead. Besides the bidding, "Honour the King," we have "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God." And each one of these duties is as binding as any other of them. It is not to follow the Apostolic rule, to observe one and neglect the others. All are of equal value, and go together.

The evils that in time past in England have prevailed, and even at the present time, in States less politically wise, do still prevail, caused by too unrestricted subservience, could never have been, if that primary safeguard, to "Honour all men," had been observed. Had it been remembered that every man has his rights and honour due to him ; that the man in one social order, and in a so-called lower class, is not therefore any less a man,—for the class of Humanity is one ;—had that always been

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remembered, there would have been no revolution anywhere. And in like manner all social upheavals, all national unhappiness, may be traced to the adherence to one part of St. Peter's counsel to the neglect of another part.

For instance, just as to-day it seems to be the need to call forth from people more the sense of reverence and awe towards high state and position, and to inculcate a spirit of loyalty; just as our dangerous tendency is to respect no one, to look up to no one, to own no loyalty, no deference to any one, but rather without rest to assert ourselves, and to claim our own independence and self-sufficiency; just so that very state of mind of refusing to honour anyone as above us, has itself been produced by the scornful aristocratic spirit claiming far more honour than it had a right to claim, and forgetting the honour due to every man as a son of God. If the one falls short in the yielding the honour due to the King, the other no less falls short in rendering the honour due to all men.

Or in another phase of history, what has been more fraught with mischief than (what we have seen more than once) the observance of that part of St. Peter's teaching which bids "Fear God," and the disregard of that which says "Love the brotherhood?" It has been found fatally possible for rulers to fear God on the one hand, and not to "Love the brotherhood" on the other. But the

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one without the other worked ruin with the best of motives.

Was there ever a more religious Government than that of Charles IX. of France, or of Louis XIV.? Religious, I mean, in the sense of being avowedly and literally guided by the fear of God to do without scruple or shrinking whatever the demands of God seemed to claim. To such rulers, the love of man, the tender pity for the weak and the defenceless, would seem but cowardly disloyalty to God. The voice of the Church, the letter of Scripture, demanded unsparing severity towards the foes of God. And the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, attested by rivers of blood, and long-sustained, relentless, slaughter and torture of the innocent, how woeful a thing is the fear of God, unsweetened by the love of the brotherhood.

Or again, history shews us in lurid colours the equally deplorable reverse of that error. If the "Fear of God" without the "Love of the Brotherhood" is harmful, no less so is the "Love of the Brotherhood" unchecked by the "Fear of God."

Can we not recall the time, not much more than a hundred years ago, when France's immense bid for Freedom (an instinct surely sprung from God) took its magnificent watchword, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity? But all that seemed to deny and oppose that great cause was associated, with

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only too much reason, alas ! with the Christian Faith, and the practice of the Christian Church ; and Religion seemed to the leaders of the Revolution to be all on the side of the King and the nobles, and to be the chief cause of the misery of the people. Then the new French Government in 1794 decreed the abolition of the Christian Religion. Faith in the very existence of God was forbidden by Act of Parliament. Sunday was abolished ; and, instead, a public holiday decreed for every tenth day. But was Fraternity without Faith any better than Faith without Fraternity ? No ! the slaughter of St. Bartholomew was, after all, a trifle compared with the Reign of Terror : and soon it was seen that the Brotherhood of Man is the vaguest of shadows without the Fatherhood of God.

Lastly, if other nations, in the exercise of their right, have decided to follow the Apostle's counsel up to the last clause, and forsake him there, we at least in England have no cause to do so. "Honour all Men. Love the Brotherhood. Fear God." We find, out of the experience of a thousand years, after much trouble, and many misunderstandings, and a harsh discipline of strife and contention, that we, at all events, can best obey these conditions of a true social life, if we persevere to the end, go with St. Peter all the way, and say with acclamation, "Honour the King."

To us it has seemed that we best preserve each

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one of these safeguards, so vital to the welfare of the people, by observing them all ; and that to surrender one is to endanger all. The withdrawal of our Honour to the King would issue in the denial of Honour to all Men ; and, most unexpectedly perhaps, we find that the Monarchy, as we know it, is the truest guarantee of Freedom.

Is it nothing to be proud of, that with the same rocks and shoals to steer clear of, the same dangers and pitfalls about our path which beset every people in the slow course of national development, our people alone have come through,—come through the age of religious domination, and the age of absolute Monarchy, and the age of popular revolt,—without break or essential change, by no tremendous upheaval, by no bloody revolution, by no vast cleavage and wrench from the past ; but, keeping together all the factors of the national life, have so, from time to time, readjusted and reformed their relations, one to another, as to secure in the end, without sacrifice of any one element, the justest, the freest, the most popular, the most stable form of government that the world has seen ?

The Crown still endures, and the people are free. The Crown is not the menace, but the condition, of popular freedom ; so that new commonwealths beyond the seas do not hasten to cast off the ties that bind them to Britain, but claim their share in the Throne and the Crown, as the bond

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of racial union, and the keystone of national strength.

As a fact, are we not at least in the way to a true harmony of classes when we have freedom of speech? Do we not see a hope of higher Brotherhood in the great confederacy of English-speaking peoples all the world over? Is there not at least the possibility and the material for prevailing, united, Fear of God, in our English Church, with her sympathies with every form of Christian worship on the one side, and on the other, her point of contact alike with Rome and Greek and Protestant?

And so we cry to-day with full heart, 'Honour the King, Long live the King.' We render thanks to God for hearing our prayers so wonderfully. In all that has happened we trace the marks of His special merciful favour towards us; and we resolve to give ourselves, as loyal citizens with a great heritage, to His purposes of higher good to our own land and to all the world.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?"

—ST. MATTHEW V., 13.

30 November, 1902. Advent Sunday. Westminster Abbey.

THE common usage of our Lord's pregnant saying involves a serious mistake. We say of a person we admire and reverence, 'He or she is the salt of the earth;' and the expression has come to be a formula for the highest excellence and goodness. We can pay no greater compliment to anyone we desire to honour, than to say of him, he is the salt of the earth; meaning the pick, the flower, one of the spiritual aristocracy, of mankind. Then, with that preoccupation in our minds, we turn back to our Lord's words, and hear Him saying to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth;" and we languidly conclude that He is paying them a compliment. 'There are none like you, disciples of Mine: you are the salt of the earth.' Having first of all drawn a wrong inference from His words, we then proceed to interpret His words in the light of our own misapprehension.

But it is a serious matter to neutralise and emasculate solemn, and deliberate, and epoch-mak-

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ing statements of His by perverting them into small talk and airy nothings.

Let us look again. When He tells His disciples they are the salt of the earth, He is not paying them a compliment. The company of the Lord and His Apostles rises before us, and it is no mutual admiration society, formed to say smooth and flattering things of one another. It is indeed a crucial test of Christ, which we are able to apply in forming our judgment of Him:—What estimate had our Lord formed of the men who surrounded Him? And what did they think of Him? How does He regard them? How does He compare with them? For His estimate of them reveals what He was Himself. Do we find that His attitude towards them is such as is consistent with the vast and immeasurable superiority which the Church, believing Him to be Divine, claims for Him? Does He move among them, and speak, as an equal, as a man among other men, praising them, admiring them? Or is His whole relation to them, unconsciously and naturally, a kindly and sympathetic, but perfectly infinite and piercing, judgment?

The letter of the Gospels tells us how He noted, to heal, men's bodily blemishes; between the lines quite as clearly we read how He penetrated men's souls. So that, whoever comes before Him is, and feels himself to be, measured, weighed, reproved, with his characteristic weakness and de-

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ficiency revealed, not for condemnation, but for correction.

Read the Gospels with this thought in mind, and see if it is not so. "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man : for He knew what was in man."* Mark the perfect grace with which, seeing all He could not help seeing, He is yet unsoured, and cheerful, and encouraging : how 'He can love us, though He read us true'; and still hope for those who despair of themselves.

But that being so, as I am sure it is, we cannot look, can we? to find compliments. We must confess, we do know it, that if He had said soft and adulatory gratulations, it would have been to manifest Himself of our standing, and as blind to Divine Holiness as we are. He never did so. He could be patient, He could not be contented, with us. He knew what was in man.

His very commendations, alas ! so rare, are but the pleased surprise of unfailing strength for unyielding frailty. "Well done, faithful servant," He says to one ; (but even that was only in a parable). "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," to another. "Thy faith hath saved thee," to another. "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God,"† to another. And always, even by His

* St. John ii., 24, 25.

† St. Matt. xxv., 21, 23 ; St. Matt. viii., 10 ; St. Luke vii., 50 ;
St. Mark xii., 34.

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admiration for man, He shews Himself greater than man.

And can He truly say to anyone, in the sense we wrongly ascribe to Him, "Ye are the salt of the earth?" Oh! who can endure unmixed approval from Jesus Christ? We don't deserve it: not one of us. He must not say so to us! Rather, O Lord, still rebuke, reprove, reproach, and we will learn, under that firm dear scrutiny, to amend ourselves.

And no less impressive is the mental attitude of the disciples towards Him. They could not pay Him compliments either. For them to have praised Him would have implied in some sense criticism of Him. One foolish person did once call Him 'good.'* But in a moment he perceived what a mistake he had made. He touched, so to speak, the red-hot metal, and shrivelled! Flattery was impertinence. Jesus was too far above them even for their praise. They could worship Him; they could not commend Him. Modern books of devotion can gush about our Lord,—call Him 'Sweet Jesus,' and so forth: but the disciples did not and could not. Their worship was too deep and sacred, and was shewn, not by words, but by trust. In the hour of danger one cried, "Lord, save me."† At the hint of separation they called in anguish, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"‡ and stopped short in grief and amazement.

* St. Mark x., 17, 18.

† St. Matt., xiv., 30. ‡ St. John vi., 68.

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But there were no compliments to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what is all this but to say that the relation of the Master to the disciples then is the same as it is to us now? For we, too, live,—or we might, if only we would,—in the Presence of One Who perpetually shames us, and makes increasing demands upon us for truer manhood; and at the same time as He reveals our poverty, reveals His own riches and sufficiency. Revealer of ourselves! Revealer of Himself! It is He, it is He, our dear and terrible Lord, Who shall come again, as this day declares, to judge the earth, Who speaks to us as He spoke to them, and says, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Nay! surely He meant what He said, and meant us to attend to what He said.

It must be that He is stating, clearly and accurately, some singular view, aspect, attitude, of the disciples' service. So far from paying them an empty compliment, He is defining for them a vital duty, declaring to them an established fact: “Ye are the salt of the earth.” ‘You have a function to the earth of the same kind as the salt to the flesh which it preserves. Realise the privilege and responsibility I have given you. It is this: here is My fruit in you: you are, and are to be, the earth's salt: not its parliament, not its pope, not its judge, not its censor, not its soothsayer, not its birch-rod; but its salt.’

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Instantly we see that three things are folded up in this, which we ought to keep separately distinct in our minds. (1) We have our Lord's authority for saying that there is in human affairs and society the constant tendency to deteriorate, to decay, to go down, to split asunder, to go rotten ; and left to itself, that will always happen. It needs salt. (2) He asserts that the presence of the Christian society and discipleship is the corrective to this downwardness. It is the salt to the earth, acting, for example, like the salt in the sea, and able to make all sweet and pure. (3) He Himself adds directly the further development, that all the time the Christian Church itself is under the same Law as the world. It is threatened just as the world is threatened. And if it does not constantly fulfil its function of the salt, it will itself be the prey to the corruption. "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing."

And here we have the problem of Christian Missions. First, the Need ; then the Remedy ; then the dread Penalty if we fail.

(1) Does anyone care to question that without Christ Society everywhere degrades? Ever abuses spring up, and get the mastery : corruptions become more and more deep-seated : vice becomes nature, goodness impracticable. Society groans like the

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man in the Epistle : * we cannot do the things that we would. And the only remedy is Christ.

I suppose there are people who, in fatuous ignorance, look for any help from Islam or Buddhism. But the great Faiths of the East, however noble in idea, however stamped in their origin by the impress of God, do not even profess to aim at the function claimed for the Faith of Christ. Christ raised Society : they degrade it. Christ invented Home : but they know not Home. Christ invented freedom. Christ invented regard for woman. Christ invented speaking the truth. Christ invented pity and mercy for the unfortunate. Christ invented holiness, and humility, and self-denying love. Above all, Christ gave the power of moral victory ; of getting free from sin. And they stand condemned as the conservatives, and the adherents, of every unsocial fetter of custom.

The fatal defect of every unchristian form of civilisation, whether of the ignorance that never has heard of Christ, or of the wondrous wisdom that has forgotten Him, is, that it has no power of resurrection and renewal, and tends ever again into bondage. At all events, no such Society has ever lasted yet : each has borne within it the seed of its own decay. It is Christ who tells us that the earth without the salt will always continue to rot.

(2) Now He who knew what Home is, what

* See Rom. vii., 15-20.

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Truth is, what Freedom is, what Holiness, what Love, is, said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth." 'It is for you! You must supply the corrective, the deterrent, the antidote to all this disorganisation and social impotence. This is your proper function in the world. Disciples of Mine, this is what you are for.'

It lies on the surface, that when He said "ye," He does not mean just ye, the men, by yourselves. He didn't mean, for example, just Peter, the Peter we know: Peter planting a blow on an unsuspecting bystander, and then running away; Peter recognising a great truth, and then promptly spoiling it by a great error; Peter protesting he never would forsake, and then denying that His Lord was his acquaintance. But "ye" as a family, a society, representing, introducing, bringing to bear, the Person of Jesus Christ. Ye, as you are, not only disciples of Christ, but in union with Him, in vital responsive fellowship with the Divine Lord. Ye reaching up to Him with infinite longing and aspiration; He bending down to you with unfailing help. He feeding, urging, enabling you; ye obeying Him, in steadfast faith that what He says is true. Ye, He says, the Body of Christ, the Christian Society, so living, brave and free, its true Divine Life, will act as the corrective to the corruption, and prove to be the salt of the earth.

Let it stand as the deliberate assertion of the

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Master, so that we have nothing to do with it but to obey it. The disciples did not tarry to argue the point, or ask how or why they, in union with Christ, could be the salt of the earth. They were fishermen, not chemists ; they used the water, not analysed it ; knew nothing of sodium chloride, or magnesium sulphate. But something else they could do and did : they went out in Christ, as He bade them, and reorganised the Roman world ! You are responsible just for this. This is all (He said), that the world shall know the Lord Jesus Christ : and if it does, it will no longer rot and die.

Sometimes the salt must, as it can, act without even the mention of His Name. But order grows, and Christ is there. By-and-bye He will be known again after a thousand years. At least anyone with the rudiment of a social instinct will see that the true fellowship in Christ must, and can, renew stagnant and hopeless humanity. The mere mention of the names, India, Africa, China, aye, Bush-Australia, aye, even Black-America, calling up so many varieties of enslavement and pollution, each with its own idiosyncrasy of evil, its special entanglement of the Devil, simply reminds us how Christ can assuredly deal with them all : Christ for Jew and Greek ; Christ for bond and free : how Christ is suited to all mankind ; and how the knowledge of Christ and His Atonement is in very truth the salvation of the world. History only enforces

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the truth, as a simple and literal fact, that the Name of Jesus Christ is the only Name under Heaven whereby we can be saved.* Nothing else works to the need of mankind. That is the remedy.

(3) But now in the third place, if with the power to do the thing, to make known this Name, to place everywhere this seed of social recovery, we hold our hand, and do it not, Christ warns us, with a word of fixed and unalterable destiny, which is the Will of the Eternal God, that there yet yawns, behind ourselves, the Gulf of Death, from which we have barely crawled; and back into it, when we lose our hold on Christ, we shall surely go as to our own place. "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing."

The unfit will not survive. Once lose the energy of bringing the world up towards the Christian level, and we have ourselves fallen from that level: cease to be the salt of the earth, and cease to be Christ's disciple. Be off, for shame, to your dung-hill! We cannot be like a costly china vase placed safe upon a shelf.

And is there a sign or a hint of such an awful thing? Does ever a cold breath come to us from the desolate land forsaken of God? Can it even begin to be, that instead of energising the corrupt

* Cp. Acts iv., 12.

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with our life, we should be paralysed ourselves with their corruption ?

Well ! there is always an anxiety and a fear lest we should begin to slacken our effort. Well ! England is beginning to do less in the cause of Missions. Men and money are not offered as they were, at home or abroad. Rather less is given to the two great Missionary Societies together, than is paid each year in the dog tax. There is talk of retrenchment and possible withdrawals from out-post Mission work. But we do it at our peril.

And there are other signs of wavering loyalty to Christ. I sometimes fear, (it is hard to say for certain, but I do fear), that in our great towns, down under our political and public life, in the springs of character and conscience, at least in the widening circles, away from, and contemptuous of, Christian influence, Heathenism is resuming us hand over hand. On any shewing the danger is always present that we, the British people, should be contented to be the scavengers and the crossing-sweepers of the world, but witless to become its sunshine and its salt.

But (mark it well) our Lord's assertion amounts to this ; that the only way to put right, and keep right, our own domestic affairs is to be such that we are consciously using the caustic power within us on spheres beyond. What hoary old abuse at home that has baffled us for centuries, what new

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problem of labour or of life daily arising for solution, would not be straightway solved if our nation was possessed with the aim of Christ to be the salt of the earth ?

The great drawback at present is that half, I do not say of the nation, but of the Church, does not help in any decent sense at all. After all, it isn't, perhaps, so much that general popular interest is falling off ; it has never rightly begun. It is an instinct with native converts to give to, and to help, all they can, Christian Missions. We have largely excused ourselves from that, sheltering ourselves most likely under some wretched calumny, or under the senseless platitude, ' I don't believe in Foreign Missions ; ' and forgetting that every moral failure from the high ideal in men abroad is directly due to isolation and neglect of proper equipment, which is our fault, at home.

I appeal to all who hear to-day to recognise the responsibility at least for knowing, from the Christian side, something of what is being done ; so as to judge for themselves if they ought not to help, with far keener zest and devotion.

There is one thing more, and I must not close without saying just this ; Christ ever forbids despair. When our Lord asked sadly, " If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? it is thenceforth good for nothing : "—' Wherewith shall the salt itself be salted ? '—I am sure He meant to ask

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that question, not as Himself in doubt as to its answer, still less as suggesting that it had no answer. But He meant us to take our answer for ourselves, and to prove that, even when the salt has lost its power, and is fit for nothing, yet, even yet, it may be renewed, and charged again and yet again with virtue, by coming again and yet again to Him in Whom all the might of Holiness dwells; Who is the Light, the Life, the Restorer, the Redeemer, of the world.

THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF GENESIS.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels."—
2 CORINTHIANS, IV., 7.

18 Feb., 1906. Sexagesima. St. Ignatius', Sunderland.

THE Church system of reading the Bible is sometimes a little embarrassing to timid or stagnant minds ; but, on the other hand, it is the most courageous and faithful way, and the best way in the long run. It is the way of reading all the Bible : of securing that, along with all that we like, there shall come up in due time those parts that we are not so sure about ; those of which we think, for one reason or another, we disapprove.

In this way (and it is the only way) we come to understand the Bible : to realise that it is the book of dawning light, which enables us to see how God has educated man, leading him up from lower to higher, and opening his eyes gradually to what is best and what is true. The path of the Bible is the path of history, and it is vitally important to continue to trace how thought, how history, has grown.

For instance, suppose we are uniting in singing together the most exquisitely pathetic and moving

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elegy, the exile song of the banished patriot : “ By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept when we remembered thee, O Sion. Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps. . . . How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land?” And then, out of all this deep and true home feeling, so tender, so appealing, so loyal to the past, there swiftly glints, like a sudden claw of steel, the tiger ferocity of the closing verse, “ O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that taketh, and dasheth thy little ones against the rock.”*

Or in another Psalm is the plea of one suffering grievously from unmerited oppression. Injustice triumphs, and he has no remedy. He can only cry to God to vindicate his cause and do him right. But what a bitter cry (from his heart, mind you !) of genuine Faith and Trust ! “ Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow ! Let his children be vagabonds and beg ! Let there be none to have pity on his fatherless children ! Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out !”† It goes without saying that such diabolical sentiments from this man of genuine faith are in the teeth of every teaching of Christ.

So some people say, ‘ Why repeat such things,

* Ps. cxxxvii, 1, 2, 4, 8, 9. (See Perowne’s translation.)

† Ps. cix., 8, 9, 11, 13. (See Perowne’s translation.)

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then, in the Christian service? Why not Bowdlerise the Bible, and leave them out?’

Well! I wouldn't be without them for anything! Not because I would catch their spirit, as my wicked heart is only too ready to do, but that I may learn, and keep learning, from them the wonders of God's grace.

The very fact that we see an inconsistency where they saw none only tells us how far we have been educated to discern more truly. Since our conscience is shocked, that only shews that we have received a finer sense of goodness and love. It doesn't follow that we are any better; but we see clearly that God has taught us. The Bible preserves to us the record of a thousand years, and reveals to us the way of God. We follow the dawning of the light.

Now a somewhat similar feeling of embarrassment, I am sure, comes over many as we resolutely read these early lessons from the Book of Genesis. Last Sunday we had the account of the six days of creation culminating in man. To-day, we have, first, the story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden; and then the account of the flood in which Noah was saved in his ark. We should have thought (I put it mildly) that the earth took more than six days to come to its present form. We should have thought Milton's idea of man's early perfection in the Garden of Eden can scarcely be the true one.

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To cover all the hills, the water would need to rise more than five miles, and what we know of the physical order of things would declare it impossible. So people who value the Bible more than anything else are embarrassed.

But I wouldn't stop reading the early chapters of Genesis for the world. Have you ever thought, in sober detail, what we owe to their most wonderful teaching? I am not going to shirk the difficulty; but I will ask you presently if there is any part of Scripture more manifestly inspired by God? Yes; turn here for guidance as to the deepest things of our life; and here is the support of all our dearest hope. In the twentieth century I stand amazed before the moral miracle—the more wonderful the more I know—of the Gospel of the Book of Genesis! How do you account (save by a hint from Himself) for this enlightened teaching about God?

Nay, but think of the wonder of it as you read the old familiar, perhaps despised, words. Here, beyond question, from of very old, stands that idea of God which is the key, the basis, of all true science and research. Here is the denial of the wrong, gross, superstitious view of the world, which makes all emancipation, all discovery, all confidence, impossible. Instead of a conflict of forces and a discord of wills, you have the sublime conception of one God, Who is also Author and supreme Lord of universal Nature. Here is the essence of the

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theory of universal Law, which yet is saved from the danger of pantheism by the faith in a personal God. "It sets God above the great complex world-process, and yet closely linked with it, as a *personal* intelligence and will that rules victoriously and without a rival.* It recognises the Nature-process, orderly development, under God.

The contrast is simply immeasurable between this—all absolutely true in idea—and the cosmogonies and speculations of all other peoples. What is new in the Hebrew belief is, in opposition to the conception prevailing in antiquity, that the world was not self-originated, nor the sport of many gods, but that it was called into existence and brought gradually to its present state at the will of a Spiritual Being, deliberately planning every step of its progress. With this, Science could begin.

We may truly say that the Theology at the basis of the Book of Genesis is what all the best thought of later times affirms.

Again, we turn from the conception of God to the doctrine of man; and we find the same sublimity of idea here too. What is the Anthropology, the science of man, presented in Genesis? "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."† And, along with this, the truth presented in a tale: that man is not what God meant him to be; that he is fallen from that high estate; and yet,

* Hast., D.B., i., 507 b. † i., 27.

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once more, that, in his very fall, he is still in the image of God. And this all turns upon the will, the moral nature, of the man, which is distinctly recognised.

It is most wonderful that man's fall is made to turn upon a moral choice, at a time, on any shewing, when the conception of individuality was hardly thought of.

Well, but that is all truth : all vital truth. It traces all the misery to the denial by man of his true nature and standing in God. And this, too, is an unique view among the nations of the world. It fills us with hope ; and it fills us with shame. But nothing is allowed to put out of sight man's destiny for God. It is a veritable anticipation of the Incarnation.

No thinker has ever made an approach to interpret man, the mystery, correctly, except on the supposition of the Book of Genesis. When all other religious systems are floundering in despair, here, on the first page of the Book of Genesis, is the clue we want, by which soon all is unravelled.

Again I say : The Anthropology at the basis of the Book of Genesis is that which all the best thought of later times affirms.

Again, ask next what the book has to say about society, the social life ; its conception of Sociology. And it is as if, having stood upon the true ground as regards God, and presented a right faith of God,

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it could then make no mistake, but had the clue to every problem.

How is it that here alone is the true idea of Home and Family? What suggestion from the ancient world of the sanctity of marriage, of wrong committed by polygamy and divorce, was there to help and advise? But the Book of Genesis, in the very forefront, gives it as a decree of the Most High: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

Must we not all sympathise with, and applaud with all our hearts—loving and valuing as we do the exclusively Christian idea of Home—the beautiful origin assigned to it in the Book of Genesis; surely, the noblest of allegories? "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.'"† So is "set forth the moral and social relation of the sexes to each other, the dependence of woman upon man, her close relationship to him, and the foundation existing in nature for the attachment springing up between them, and for the feelings with which each should naturally regard

* ii., 24; † ii., 21-23.

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the other. The woman is formed out of the man's side : hence it is the wife's natural duty to be at hand,—a help to her husband ; it is the husband's natural duty ever to cherish and defend his wife, as part of his own self."* Here is the solid fact of this conception appearing, we know not whence (save that it surely came from God), amid the infamous corruptions of the ancient world.

Surely, I may say again : The Sociology at the basis of the Book of Genesis is what all the best thought of later times affirms.

Still, once more, what of the last things ; the issue, and outcome, to which man's life tends ? True, not much can be expected of light from the Book of Genesis on this subject of Eschatology (the doctrine of the last things) ; but, at all events, the motive in the story of the Flood is fully apparent, and bears closely upon the question. Here we see God as a moral Ruler, Who cannot bear sin and unrighteousness. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."† Here, at least, is the passion for Holiness we look for in the Judge of all the world. And this comes out with tremendous emphasis ; this, almost the text of warning to all peoples, responsible for their life and soul ; this

* Driver, on Gen. ii., 22. † vi., 5.

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inevitable doom of a degenerate race : and, then, out of the doom, a shoot, a remnant, a revival of new life. The history of the world, and of countless races, which have proved unworthy and have been cast aside, testifies to the awful, but blessed, truth, declared here.

And again I say : The Eschatology of the Book of Genesis is what all the best thought of later times affirms.

And so I could go on, testing point after point of the teaching of this wonderful book. It has lessons for us of the Sabbath rest, and the weekly work ; of sacrifice, acceptable and otherwise ; of the sanctity of human life, and the lawful penalty on its destruction ; of God's covenant of mercy ; and much besides.

But enough said. When we find the book right under the scrutiny of modern thought ; right in its Theology, its Anthropology, its Sociology, its Eschatology, may I not rightly say that this is the leading of God Himself ; and that no part of the Bible is more unmistakeably inspired and God-given than this ? Indeed we could not afford ever to give up the reading of the Book of Genesis.

But what then ? Shall we therefore claim that, because it is right in so much, it must be inferred that it is right in all ? Because it shews a wonderful sense of truth in those deep matters upon which it seems to be competent to speak—God, man,

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society—therefore it must be of equal authority in every other region of knowledge?

No! We must not do that. We must not take it for granted that, because God guided men of old to some vital truths which men could never be able to attain by themselves, therefore He spared them the labour and the responsibility of learning for themselves other truths quite within their ultimate range.

For God has done this too. He has spoken to men in new ways, and by other means. He has led them to seek and enquire for themselves. And the carefully and painfully attained lessons of science and literary study are as much the Voice of God, as little to be disregarded and ignored, as that Voice of moral authority to which man bends in allegiance. We must not set one Voice of God against another Voice of God. We must, we must, reconcile them together.

God has told us more than was known to the writer of Genesis. He has told us that the process of creation of the world, and of man, is far more wonderful and beautiful than we thought. He has told us by the revelations of Geology that the earth has been forming and re-forming for dateless ages. The chalk cliff, the coal mine, give us their indisputable testimony of ocean bed and primeval forest; and so speak the fossil remains of vast antiquity. A recent work on Astronomy places the "time at

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which the moon was flung off from the then liquid earth at about fifty-seven million years ago.”*

And, further, our students’ most candid study points more and more to the conclusion that all animate life is one, in plant, and brute, and man ; and has grown up, and is growing up, from lower to higher, till endowed by God with soul and will. Do distinguish between what Genesis says of the fall, and what Milton imagines. I know of no reason why we should demur to the biologist’s suggestion of the evolution of man from anthropoid ancestors. How much more wonderful, how much more honouring to God, always is the fact, than man’s impression of the fact !

But is there, then, contradiction between two Voices of God ? Here comes in by God’s mercy, yet another Voice of God to help us. Man’s trained literary skill helps us.

We now know beyond all question that the Book of Genesis is a compilation from different sources, and not the deliberate work of one prophetic hand. In substance the Genesis account of the Creation and the Flood is unquestionably derived from much older sources in the writings of older nations. And, further, all through can be traced parallel accounts, or versions, of these things ; as, for instance, there are two accounts of the Creation of man (in ch. i. and ii.), and two accounts of the

* Turner, *Modern Astronomy*, p. 277. (Quoted by Driver, p. 20.)

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Flood (in ch. vi. and vii.), put together. And that is, that the prophet, full of his message from God (of God, and man, and society), has used the traditional story of his day in which to embody his higher truth, rather than construct his own scheme of the world.

Yes! The new Voice of God must, of course, be welcomed to correct the old. And still the old truth, the Divine inspiration of the old, stands more than ever secure. We can freely say, I will both accept from my heart the eternal truths revealed by God, and, at the same time, freely correct and amend, as further light from God is vouchsafed, the mere husk and envelope in which they are clothed.

Viewed in this light, who can be unmoved by this spectacle of the Divine breaking through the human? We read this primitive child-view of the beginnings of things, and we cannot be so untrue to all we know from God as to put forward what is said as if it were a scientific statement for our day. But we have heart and soul to sympathise, and to see it all "fraught with a pathos so magnificent." Whilst still, and for ever, now and always, the Divine truths enshrined in the earthen vessel, remain the foundation and the security of our full Christian faith.

ON GROWING OLD.

*“Those that be planted in the house of the Lord
. . . shall still bring forth fruit in old age.”—*

PSALM XCII., 13, 14.

3 Jan., 1909. 2nd S. after Christmas. St. Ignatius, Sunderland
7 February, 1909. Septuagesima. St. Paul's, West Hartlepool.*

ON the very smallest hour of Friday morning I wished the congregation of St. Ignatius a ‘Happy New Year.’ I do so again now in my first Sunday sermon. I wish you all a very ‘Happy New Year.’

It seems to me that some people are a little thoughtless (it is not unknown), a little thoughtless in their New Year rejoicing. For some, perhaps too cheerful, persons, one is apt to wonder what there is to be so demonstratively glad about, in the fact that another year is sped, and is recorded with the buried, but undecaying, past. I, for one, dread the elaboration of festivity. We are told of the new fashion in London of elaborate midnight supper parties in every restaurant, as well as the usual gatherings *outside* St. Paul's.

There is, as I hope to shew, an intelligible New Year rejoicing; and there is an unintelligible

* See special note regarding this Sermon at the end of the Prefatory Notice.

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New Year rejoicing. Do those of the latter sort who are so glad, want the years of their life to hurry away so fast? Are they so impatiently looking forward to the time when all the New Years are spent, and the human goal is reached? Apparently (too apparently) not. Why, then, rejoice for another year gone past recall? It is rather like a German Parliament passing, with triumphant cheers of glorious victory, a new vote of credit for the Navy, without a thought of rates and taxes to come.

Or are they so glad rather because the Old Year is gone, than because the New Year has come? I fancy many people say in their hearts, 'I don't think anything can be worse for me than the Old Year has been : it must be all the Old Year's fault : I am glad to try a new one : ' forgetting that "the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings."*

Anyhow, I feel sure of this, that while we do well to wish one another 'a Happy New Year,' and be as glad as ever we can, still there are very many who, if they would think a little more, would feel constrained to rejoice a little less, and be all the better for it. I think we ought all to use our influence to secure better things.

But this is a passing reflection. I want my thought to-night to be one that shall help and encourage the true gladness that should come to all

* *Julius Cæsar*, Act I., Sc. ii., 140.

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of us with a new beginning. The new beginning is another step in a process that embraces us all; and of that I wish to think. I cannot bear to talk of earthquakes, and the awful travail of creation, and of man. Instead, this shall be our subject. We are all of us getting older; and I want to speak of this 'growing old.'

When one has experienced (more or less consciously), fifty and odd New Years, one begins, perhaps, to take some notice of the fact. Even those who think they have so much to look forward to that time does not matter to them, yet will not deny that they also are getting old, and may be ready at least to take warning by us. (For some of us the time has come, for all others it is coming, when we can be no longer young.

We need, first of all, firmly to recognise the fact. We are becoming old. A quarter of a century ago it was somebody else. Now it is we. ^{who} ~~We~~ are to be old men and old women. It is the inevitable fact, and we should recognise it with self-possession and cheerfulness. Nothing is more absurd than for anyone, ~~of either sex~~, to be seen clinging to youth after youth has departed: whether it be in dress, or in talk, or in amusement. The pretence does not alter the fact, and above all let us respect the fact. The fact alone is always respectable, pretence never. We may succeed in hiding the fact from ourselves, but from other people, never! When King Henry

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said, "How ill white hairs become a fool and jester,"* he meant, "How ill fooling and jesting become white hairs!"

I read somewhere the other day where this pretence of clinging to youth was compared to a child being sent to bed. The child refused to go. He kicked, and bit, and scratched, and clung (one after the other) to all the pieces of furniture he passed on his reluctant progress bedwards, till he was fairly torn out of the room. Let us elderly people not depart like that! It is as absurd to see an elderly person pretending to be young, as to see (what we see so often) a boy pretending to be a man. We have to go! Let us go with dignity and good temper. Let us confess that we can no longer do what we used to do, with elegance and precision. We cannot run, or stoop, or be agile, as we used to do. Those who attach an exaggerated importance to their personal appearance cannot, (do what they will) retain the freshness of youthful looks and form. Certainly we shall not win the regard we thirst for by pathetically soliciting it. Never again shall I in the cricket field, you perhaps in the concert hall or the ball-room, win the applause of admiring beholders.

Well then! it is wisest frankly to recognise the fact, and turn and ask, what then God has still in store for us, dear friends, to make His glorious.

* *King Henry IV.*, Pt. ii., A. v., Sc. v., 52.

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world yet more glorious and beautiful to us, His children. If we cannot properly live in a sphere from which we have been separated, let us live faithfully and joyously in that to which He has brought us instead ; and we shall surely find that our life in our middle-age—'growing old'—is far better and not less interesting than anything that has gone before.

I can't be young again ! All right, then, I don't want to. Thank you ! I would rather be as I am. And all the same, I will greet each New Year's Day with sober assent and satisfaction.

There are great compensations. Let us think of some of them. I, if I am any good at all, have learned to be much wiser, and more tolerant, and more patient. I am able to see much more in the world than I could,—much more to admire, more of beauty, and grandeur, and love. The world, and human life, is much richer and fuller than it seemed before. I can understand better the great things great men have said and done. Things I used to be afraid of I fear no longer. I have learned much better what things I must do, and what I must not do. And oh ! how good God has been in sparing me, and guiding me. For, best of all, I fear God better. There has been time to trace His hand in my life, without all doubt, to prove, by many a trial, (which makes me surer than any process of reason could do) that God is near me, and cares for me. Oh ! how He cares !

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And all this, and much more than I can say, tells me that my ageing time is not an unnatural contradiction and falling away from my true life of faith, but the next stage in God's providence: itself the crown of youth, the higher state meant to succeed the lower. And as well may the growing child cry to be put back into the infant class for the rest of his school time, as I hanker after the immaturity of boyhood or early manhood

Then it is such a relief, such an addition to the solid satisfaction of living, to have done with a hundred perturbations and fretfulnesses and anxieties which used to make life a fever, and keep one back. After all, the secret of even tolerable happiness is nowhere else so much as in the conscience; and I ought to know something about conscience by this time. At least I know how to be forgiven. I know how to retain peace even in the ever-weary conflict with sin and the lower self.

The time was, when, in the bland cocksureness of youth, I used to pour contempt on the most illogical and provoking doctrine of the Christian Creed,—the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all my life since I have been learning that it is the secret of life and progress, of movement and inward peace: that I know nothing till I learn how to be freed from guilt during the long battle with sin, how to find life and cleansing in the Cross of Christ. In mid-age all this becomes mine:

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mine, as my right hand is mine : beyond dispute, past question. I could not live without it. That is a thing settled, a treasure, an acquisition, I take with me to whatever world I am to go.

Hence it follows that as I grow old my gaze must still be fixed on the future, not on the past. Still bigger, still better, still more perfect life is yet to come. Something that contains in itself, and reproduces, all the best in all that has gone before, and for which all that has been merely the preparation. "The best is yet to come," and I must go on towards it. The youth, the freshness, that cannot be in limbs and face, must be in my heart and mind. I need not let them ever wax old.

It is indeed a great temptation to ageing people to live in the past rather than in the present. Dean Goulburn, in his "Pursuit of Holiness,"* especially notes that as a tendency in his own experience, to be guarded against. And you remember how Tennyson† protested against the same thing :

"When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
Brings the Dreams about my bed,
Call me not so often back,
Silent voices of the dead,
Toward the lowland ways behind me,
And the sunlight that is gone !

* Ch. xv. † *The Silent Voices.*

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Call me rather, silent voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights beyond me,
On, and always on !”

Do not waste time in dreaming of past days and reviving the old dramas, as if all life was past for you ; but brace the mind to live on, ever pressing forward to enter new regions for new adventures, and experience, bringing newer fuller life in God : more to feel, more to love, more to know ; a deeper passion, a stronger conviction, a keener perception, a brighter vision, a higher aspiration.

Death is only when we cease to grow : the oldest must still be growing. Life past ? Life is only just begun for the oldest here ! Professor Tyndale used to describe the earliest germ of life from which he guessed all latent powers and senses were developed by evolution, as a single cell dimly sensitive all over. I won't say what I think of the speculation : but it looks as if something of the kind were what we are to come to : to be sensitive all over ;—more feeling, more sympathy, all over. With a spiritual prospect you will not cry after a physical retrospect.

Once more. There is immense compensation in the capacity we older people may, if we choose, come to have, for entering into other people's experiences and making them our own : living in

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other people's lives when our own is wearing out. This 'altruism' is peculiarly the province of the older. If there is not much to live for in themselves, not much joy of their own that they can still expect (but I maintain there is always, very much), then they can live in other lives, and rejoice in the doings of other people. Why should I only care for something brave if *I* have done it? Or rejoice in a good or beautiful thought, in words, or on a canvas, or translated into life, if *I* have thought it and said it?

There is a most interesting passage in one of George Eliot's Essays,* where the speaker describes how every one seemed instinctively to use him as a sort of dumping ground for their confidences about themselves. ("My acquaintances tell me unreservedly of their triumphs and their piques; explain their purposes at length, and reassure me with cheerfulness as to their chances of success; insist on their theories, and accept me as a dummy with whom they rehearse their side of future discussions; and unwind (to me) their coiled up griefs.") Then at first, he says, he used sometimes to reciprocate confidences, and try to tell his own thoughts and hopes and feelings, till he was warned "by the rapidly lowering pulse and spreading nervous depression in the previously vivacious interlocutor," that

* The Impressions of Theophrastus Such; I., *Looking Inward*

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people generally do not take the interest in your story that they do in their own. Theophrastus accepted this division of labour in good part, and discovered that after all you can live your life in, and for other people. “While my desire to explain myself in private ears has been quelled,” ~~he goes on,~~ “the habit of getting interested in the experiences of others has been continually gathering strength, and I am really at the point of finding that this world would be worth living in without any lot of one’s own. Is it not possible for me to enjoy the scenery of the earth without saying to myself ‘I have a cabbage garden in it?’”

Dear friends, perhaps this sort of service is what older people are still good for, and where they can take delight, in being of use to younger persons. If we could only get to regard our juniors as we naturally do regard (say, for instance) the children of Dickens’s stories,—with the same pity and desire to help! His children are always the little victims of sickening mismanagement and misunderstanding: their elders so hard, and unlovely, and cold, and blind; self-centred, inhuman, unchristlike prigs! And you long to take the poor children in your arms and tell them what the pity, and love, and hope, and forgiveness of Jesus is, (and ours may be), before they, in their turn, are quite spoiled and de-humanised.

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If only we are sufficiently altruistic, able to forget ourselves, and take joy in the lives of others, we can be of great value here : yes ! live anew in others, and hereby know perhaps the best and purest joy open to man. But you must be ready to forget your silly old self, and think far more of the young, unformed lives about you.

And so, at last, I come to my text. It is time you heard it again. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord . . . shall still bring forth fruit in old age." There's a promise for you, old friend ! Planted, yourself, in the house of the Lord. Firmly rooted in Him, yourself: and more,—in His House. What a good, true, old churchman or churchwoman you will be ! Not simply in the arm-chair by the fireside at home, but planted in the House of the Lord. We can do very little for the Lord except we do it through His House. That is where we have learned to grow.

But then there's no old age that can stop us growing. Then, in Him, in His Church, we shall never cease to bring forth fruit; because it isn't our fruit but His. Never a dried, withered stock : always life and always fruit : and therefore always peace, joy, and contentment, however ancient we are to become. Each New Year that comes, even though we get to be as old as the hills, a 'Happy New Year.'

ON GROWING OLD.

Grow old along with me !
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made :
Our times are in His Hand
Who saith " A whole I planned,
Youth shews but half ; trust God : see all nor
be afraid ! " *

* Browning ; *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, St. I.

THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERIENCE.

“ But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?”—2 CORINTHIANS III., 7, 8.

14 August, 1910. 12th Sunday after Trinity.
St. Ignatius', Sunderland.

TO-DAY'S Epistle gives a very good example of the truth that you often cannot understand the meaning of what is written in the New Testament without a careful study of the context. This Epistle for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity is wholly meaningless as it stands in the Prayer Book, and until you have acquired the drift and line of thought in the Apostle's mind. What is all this about the “ ministration of death ” and the “ ministration of the Spirit ? ” What is meant by “ the letter ” and “ the Spirit ? ” How is the “ ministration of condemnation ” glory ? What does it all mean and matter to us in the present century ?

But when we trace out and examine the context light dawns. We find that we are dealing with a very personal matter concerning the Apostle St.

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Paul. He is defending himself against reproaches and misunderstandings that had come upon him in his dealings with the Corinthian Church, and he is justifying himself against their complaints. He had been charged with fickleness of purpose in not having come to them.

But chiefly he finds it necessary to vindicate the Apostleship which some had depreciated, and to shew that, whilst it is in no sense a matter of personal dignity and self-aggrandisement, yet under God that ministry of his is of the highest value, and indeed essential to the well-being of the Church of God, as a veritable link to, and pledge of, the unseen Lord and King. Perhaps doubts had risen in their minds over the case of the Corinthian offender who had been involved in a very gross sin against morality, and whose excommunication St. Paul had decreed, in the former Epistle, and now, on the repentance of the sinner, remits in this. And it is to shew the Apostle's ministry in its true light that he contrasts the Apostleship with the office of Moses himself as the great Lawgiver of the Old Testament. He says, "If that ministration of Moses was glorious, how much rather does the ministration of the Gospel of Christ exceed in glory?"

He recalls the well-known record that, when Moses brought from the Mount the tables of stone, the glory of God, from Whose Presence he came,

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transfigured his face. The ordinary idea of the veil with which he covered his face is that it was used to shield the beholders from a dazzling light which they could not stand ; and our Authorised Version lends colour to that idea : “ And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.”* The Hebrew, the Septuagint, and our own Revised Version—“ And when Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face”—bring out the truth that he is said to have veiled his face, not to conceal the glory, but to hide its fading away in the light of common day.

The thought is that, when Moses entered the special Presence of God, the glory of God passed into his face ; and when he re-entered the world this glory gradually failed and disappeared ; and ever he could rekindle the glory only by repairing to the Lord of Glory. So later, with the Apostles, people “ took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”†

Now this is what concerns us : St. Paul’s argument that if this was so with Moses, in the ministration of the Law, much more, in a much truer, deeper sense, is the same thing true with the Apostles and Ministers of Christ in the ministration of the Gospel.

I am not prepared with an explanation of the marvel recorded of Moses. We do know that, even

* Exodus xxxiv., 33. † Acts iv., 13.

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in the case of the dead, very often after death there rests upon the dead face an ineffable expression of rapture wholly beyond the joy of this world, and that in a short time this passes away; and generally there is expressed in human faces the reflection of strong and deep emotion through which they have just been passing. I can well believe that the first perception (in an age of low average morality and knowledge of God) of the true character of God to man (so different in reality to what all men thought);—the sudden apprehension for the first time of the promise of religious and social betterment held out in the Covenant and the Ten Commandments;—this might account for all that is said of Moses, and that the meeting with God must be joy untold, reflected in his face.

The glory that shone in Moses' face is not recorded that he may seem more glorious than anything of which we have experience, but on the contrary, it is adduced that we may know how much better and more glorious still must be the ministration of the Gospel of Christ; for that passeth away, but this remaineth. St. Paul says it is so. The ineffable glory is there, and is there abidingly. We need no veil lest it be seen to contract and vanish. The glory of the Gospel is infinitely better than the glory of Moses.

And if we say, 'Where is it? I do not see it, and have never seen it; to me there comes no

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sudden lighting up of the common day to tell of a Divine Sun of my Soul near at hand, but all is bleak, cold, commonplace as ever, wherever I am:’ then St. Paul will answer that you are like the Jews of whom He speaks, in reading the Gospel ; the veil is no longer the veil on Moses’ face, but a veil on the hearers’ hearts: “ A veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever a man shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”* That is, if we saw things truly, there is a glory overshadowing us all, members of Christ, far more wonderful than any that could have irradiated Moses. As with all light, you only see it as it is reflected ; and if we do not reflect the glory, it will be invisible to us, though it bathes us all day long.

St. Paul is stating the soberest of sober facts. If it is true that God has become Flesh and established a kinship with each of us, and we have been baptised into membership with the Lord of Life, in the Kingdom of His Love, nay, in His own very Person ; if it is true that in the Eucharist, He grants us close contact with Himself, and the Food of Eternal Life, such as not only feeds and comforts our every need, giving us strength and sufficiency for every demand, but also fits and adapts us (we know not how) for the Heavenly Life that is to come and last for ever ; then, is there not here a glory far beyond any that Moses could know ?

* Verses 15, 16 (R.V.)

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Yes! it is all there; and only if we do not reflect it, if we draw down the veils upon face and heart, could it fail that our faces would shine with inward glory, and we should walk crowned with peace and joy in friendship with the Eternal.

How do you account for it that to different people the Eucharist means such entirely different things? One comes, and to him it means almost nothing. It effects nothing, it is only a form, it does not seem to do him any good, and perhaps soon he gives it up as a great disappointment, after all he had been told. Another comes, and is filled with transport, and he has no words to express the wonder and the joy. Ah! I know what it is. The one has the veil up, and the other has it tight drawn down. The glory is all there—always; but all do not reflect it.

Now I am dwelling upon this attitude of St. Paul's mind for a special reason. I draw attention to the line of his reasoning. There is, there must be, more glory to be seen and found now than before. I don't suppose St. Paul himself could quite always reflect it; but he never doubted that it was all still there. He had decided that this relation with God in Christ was the truth, and he committed his soul to it. He did not allow himself to be the prey of tense and mood. Once for all, this was the Faith, and he proved it true in life.

I want to commend St. Paul's way to our

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Christian thinkers (I don't like to call them doubters) of to-day. To-day we are all oppressed by the feeling that we have got to prove everything, and that if we can't prove anything we can't believe anything. But that was not St. Paul's way. The average churchman, with only the average amount of knowledge of evidence, or of Scripture, or of Church History, is miserable if he can't prove, out of the exiguous scrap of information he possesses, every single thing the Church says. He knows little of the Past; and yet for him it seems that the Faith must stand or fall by the verdict of the Past: and it is a question of eighteen hundred years ago, and not a question of now and here.

Take, shortly, the three points I have mentioned.

(1) He is told you cannot prove the miracles of Christ, or, say, the miracles as summed up in the Resurrection. And if he finds he can't do so, he is miserable directly. But that is not the way; at least not the way of St. Paul. It is true that if our friend knew a little more, he could say with Dr. Westcott that no single fact in the history of mankind, however universally accepted as true, has anything like the amount of what we call proof, I mean evidence such as a court of justice would receive, and hold conclusive, as has the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But still St. Paul would not be found relying on that. But St. Paul would say, 'I believe in the Resurrection of Christ because I

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have seen the Risen Lord, and know He is alive. I know the glory. It has stricken me blind, and opened my eyes, and now irradiates every foot of my way.'

(2) Or again, with a mighty parade of knowledge the unbeliever will tell his hearers that there are the gravest suspicions as to the authenticity and genuineness of nearly all the books of the New Testament ; and so our records are untrustworthy, and the work of a later day. As a matter of fact, if he was quite honest, he would add that even the most advanced criticism has swung round of recent years, and now admits that the effort to prove a later date than the first century for the books of the New Testament has failed. But after all that is not the point. Rest assured the books will never be shewn to be unhistorical. They are a great deal safer than the Bank. But it is a question of the treasure itself, not of the earthen vessel that contains it. If you broke the vessel you would still have the treasure ; and we must learn to be able to say, ' My knowledge of Christ depends on no critical problem of antiquity. I know Him as my living Lord to-day, and I stake my all on that.' St. Paul knew the Lord who was ruling him.

(3) Or once more : the assailant of to-day has largely dropped the attack on the books of the Bible now, and appeals to Church History, and goes for the Creeds. He is immensely happy with the sage discovery that the language of the Creeds is not

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the language of the New Testament. Considering that the Creeds were avowedly composed to meet the needs of the Church two hundred years after New Testament times, it is likely that that would be so, and that they would be the expression of the Apostolic Faith in the terms of the later day. You do not find in St. Paul the terminology of the Athanasian Creed or the Nicene Creed; but the Faith in the Incarnation found in St. Paul's words is the same as in the more elaborate and philosophical statement that later thought and later negations required.

If, then, we wish to take up the same attitude as St. Paul, we shall reply to all these objections: I am not worried about proofs of near two thousand years ago. Even on that matter I have all the intellectual satisfaction that I want. But that is not the point. There has come to me down all the ages the central faith in the Incarnation: that God in Christ is with us and amongst us. Here it is, before me. What shall I do with it? Can it be proved untrue? Certainly not! What shall I do with it? It tells me that I am redeemed from sin and evil, and united to the Lord of Life. In Him I have forgiveness and the endless power of renewal, whereby I may and shall realise myself and the full destiny marked out for me. And what is true for me is true of mankind, and herein is the hope of the world and the guarantee of Heaven. Herewith

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we may live, and die. Here is the spring of all hope and all courage.

This way has been tested by saints and heroes throughout the Christian age. It has never failed. It has richly satisfied them all. It is the absolute condition of all goodness and righteousness, and triumph over every ill. What shall I do with it? I live surrounded by the glory. Shall I refuse to yield my soul till every captious question is answered, and every imagined difficulty is solved? No! but I will commit my soul to this faith in Christ so commended to me by the best and truest of mankind in all ages. I will at least prove it for myself by believing and obeying it, and the more I do so, the more satisfied and contented in intellect and heart alike do I become. I will know that the glory is all about me, and I will train my soul to see it.

If Bible and Creeds alike could be destroyed to-morrow it would be the same. I have seen the Revelation of the Lord, and I cannot conceive or meet the world on any other ground than that of the Incarnation. I cling to St. Paul's test: "The Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."*

* Verses 17, 18 (R.V.)

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“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”—
ST. LUKE X., 25.

25 Sept., 1910.* 18th Sunday after Trinity.
St. Ignatius', Sunderland.

THAT was a question, so it seems, that was often put to our Lord. Men brought to Him the anxiety that troubled them most. They seemed to be sure that He knew the answer to their questions. It is a testimony, no less valuable for being indirect, and quite undesigned, to our Lord's own character and being. How was it that He so impressed people? What was there in Him that, naturally, instinctively, unsolicited, unprompted, they took it for granted, as a matter of course, that He was acquainted with, was master of, the conditions and sanctions of Eternal Life?

We are bound to notice always in our study of the New Testament as one of the most reliable witnesses and guides to the truth (because it is so accidental and unconscious), the evidence of the influence which, when we look, we can see He exercised. We are able still to see Him through the eyes of men who saw Him then. It is as if we

* The last Sunday before Canon Cope's death.

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could recover a photograph of Him from the retina of eyes that have ages ago beheld Him. From what they say, from the involuntary expressions that escape them, we can infer the causing force in Him. We can ask, 'What was He, to influence them so?'

Well! on all sides they are taking it as a matter of course, that He knew how to gain Eternal Life; that He was a final authority upon Eternal Life. It certainly was not that He had attained any boundless authority for laying down, for docile souls, the conditions of Heaven. He was no doctrinaire; He ever repudiated that kind of leadership. But anyhow, we may infer that they recognised Life in Him, such as they had never known before. He had a hold on the unseen, a power of raising them up to God, a flavour of Heaven, which assured them that He could be relied on to tell them about the unseen, about God, about Heaven.

I don't say they reasoned this; they knew it. They deferred to Him as of unquestioned majesty and spiritual ascendancy. He was such that it was simply the most natural thing in the world to come and ask, 'What shall we do to inherit Eternal Life? Thou knowest what Life is,—Eternal Life; Thou canst see what is hid from our eyes, and our hearts. Tell us! What shall we do?'

So the young Ruler came, all aflame with the desire to attain, to achieve, the assurance of his in-

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heritance in Heaven. So the Lawyer in our passage, under the veil of testing Him, with a hard question, sought the key to the riddle of life's destiny ; and received the satisfying answer, which can never be given to any question wholly insincere.

And still that enquiry is never long banished from any human heart. We still want to know. What shall we do? Am I doing so as to win, or lose, the final goal? An imperious instinct compels me to look onward for an inheritance of Eternal Life. To whom shall I go?

There is no one else to look to, but to Christ. If He cannot tell us, then no one can. But our hearts witness that He knows all to do with Eternal Life. It isn't only that He says, "I came that they may have Life ;"* but also that all association with Him brings us the consciousness of Resurrection, the apprehension of renewal, breaths of hope and sweetness, gleams of the Eternal Peace. Our souls, like theirs of old, recognise Him the Lord of Life.

Now in the case before us, how did our Lord treat that question? He assuredly did not evade it, or disclaim the power to answer it. By His answer He approves the reference to Him. But He does something better than answer it, He makes the man answer it,—puts him in the way of answering it,—for himself. Our Lord prefers that, with His help, we shall solve our difficulties for ourselves.

* St. John x., 10 (R.V.)

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He makes him state the great conditions of Eternal Life, which the man knew perfectly well already :— “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself:” and then by His own parable, the Lord draws out the force of that.

But what we often overlook is the fact that in telling the parable of the Good Samaritan, our Lord is answering not only the question, “Who is my neighbour?” but also, and far more, the question, “What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?” ‘You inherit Eternal Life by loving,—loving God, and loving your neighbour; and your ‘neighbour’ is the next suffering man who needs your help.’ It is as if He said: ‘You speak of inheriting Eternal Life; but Eternal Life is not inherited, it is lived. It cannot be given you as a reward or a prize for obedience here. It is not, as you will go on thinking, the recompense, in another world, for something that you ‘do,’ or are willing to ‘do,’ in this. Life is the same wherever it is lived; and if you want Eternal Life there, you want it here, and should live it here. The only way to possess it is to live it. You can never inherit Eternal Life as a quality, a blessed addition added to your present self, and still external to yourself. It is yourself: it is you—truly, essentially, eternally—alive, with God’s Life. If you love God, and love man, then you are already knowing Eternal Life: and when that state of Love is become your own, your real

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state, then, wherever you are, whatever world you are in—here or there—you are inheriting Eternal Life. ‘To do things’ for the sake of securing it, is to miss the whole point. The mere ‘doing things’ doesn’t make you any more Eternally alive. You are alive when you are always helpful.’

It is not in doing good, but in being good, that we enter Life. Our Lord draws the contrast between, on the one hand, the Priest who passed by on the other side, or the Levite who came and just looked at the wronged man, and on the other hand, the good Samaritan who treated him as his own son. Do we not see at once, if someone had come across to the Priest or the Levite and whispered in his ear, ‘Go to him; here’s a chance for you; it is by relieving such distress as this that you inherit Eternal Life;’ there would surely have been no chance for the Good Samaritan; they would have tumbled over one another in proffering, nay pressing, their assistance. But would such help have been one step towards Eternal Life? Such service would have been utterly vitiated, and rendered quite valueless, by the wrong motive; that is, to inherit Eternal Life, and not to do, for its own sake, and for the sufferer’s sake, a blessed act.

But Eternal Life is in the happy heart that rejoices to do, for pity’s sake, the blessed act. The state of soul in which the Samaritan yielded joyfully this service,—this state of soul, extended, confirmed

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in him, become permanently and consistently his own ; a state of soul thrilled through by realised love for God and love for his neighbour ;—that is Eternal Life, begun here and now, and to grow, and expand ever hereafter. It was so right, so blessed, so glad and happy in its triumphant conquest of evil, and restoring and amending of the bad consequences of evil, in its creative power of reducing to order and harmony the irregular, the rebellious, the deathly, and giving hope and comfort where death was before, that the Samaritan tasted, as he ministered, the ‘thrice repured nectar’* of Heaven. The whole picture of the Good Samaritan’s action is a picture of a little bit of genuine Eternity, such as Jesus rejoiced in for Himself, when He said : “ I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.”†

Thus the parable of the Good Samaritan contains the complete answer to the question of the lawyer, “What shall I do to inherit Eternal Life?” Eternal Life is the state of existence which is thus absorbed in Love.

Our Lord leaves latent the inference, rather than express it further in so many words, that to be complete, this love of the neighbour is founded on, and caused by, love to God. That was all in the

* *Troilus and Cressida*, Act III., Sc. ii.

† St. John iv., 32, 34.

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man's own true answer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and it is then taken for granted by our Lord. But another time He expressed it in so many words, when He said: "This is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."*

The upshot of it all is that we should save the waste of working for any Eternity to come, and make our lives Eternal now. That we can do, if we bring them with patient persistence now, into stedfast communion with God in Christ, and suffer Him to flood our days with the joy of bringing forth the fruit of love and mercy to all around us.

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* St. John xvii., 3.

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